



# INDIA

## The Road to Self-Government

by

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## PREFACE

THE circumstances in which this Preface is written and this book is published may at first glance make an account of India's progress towards self-government during the last three decades seem somewhat academic. Second thoughts, however, will quickly dispel this illusion and show that both the actual part which India is playing in this second world war, and the manner and kind of solution to her immense political problem which is ultimately reached, bear very directly on the still more immense problem of whether the world is to be slave or free, governed by reason and justice or by violence and cruelty.

Within whatever shape the new world order may be evolved after this war a leading part must be played by the British Empire and Commonwealth of Nations, and in this lesser world order comprised by the Society of British nations and colonies the position of India is of outstanding importance, since she will be the pioneer of the non-British and non-European peoples in the British Empire along the road which leads to the intimate association exemplified by Great Britain and the other self-governing British nations overseas. There is much significance in the date 1908 at which the developments recorded in this book begin, for it was in 1908, after the final failure of Joseph Chamberlain's scheme for Imperial Federation and the British Government's hopes for more or less complete centralization of defence expenditure and policy in these islands, that the new and still somewhat strange conception of a world-wide commonwealth of autonomous nations began to take on a definite shape.



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At this time, too, the union of the four colonies of South Africa, including the two recently hostile Boer states, with fully responsible self-government like Canada and the other Dominions, marked perhaps more dramatically than anything else in the history of the Empire the change which had taken place since the middle of the nineteenth century in our ideas of Imperial relations and the form and character of our Imperial society. Since 1908 it has been clear that India would provide the crucial test of the universality of the principles embodied in the Commonwealth of British nations of British and European origin. The developments of the years from 1908 onwards, and particularly since 1930 when the Round Table Conference met, have shown that as far as the British peoples are concerned the principles of their Commonwealth are universal and can be extended to peoples of a very different origin and tradition. If there was any doubt about that, after the Round Table Conference and the passing of the 1935 Government of India Act, it has been dispelled by the declarations of the British Government and speeches of the present Secretary of State for India, Mr. Amery, since this war began.

The acute reader, however, will notice that the important political developments, namely the Morley-Minto Reforms which open this story, gave Hindu-Muslim relations a new and vitally important turn. It took them out of the religious and social spheres into the political. Communal representation, which Lord Morley fought so strenuously, was the result of the insistence of Muslims themselves. It was the first hint of the possible emergence of the concept of a nation within a nation in India, which, as the closing passages of the book show, has now become somewhat sharply defined and has grown to disquieting strength. The lesson of this account of India's

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progress towards self-government is exactly the same as the lesson which Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa learnt, namely, that within the British Commonwealth or Society of Nations, responsible self-government, or home rule, or whatever we like to call it, is waiting to be taken and used whenever the conditions of the country concerned make it possible for its people to reach out their hand. The conditions for this are a certain political awareness and maturity, and above all—and this is the lesson taught powerfully by Canada and South Africa—a reasonable degree of national solidarity, a willingness to consider sectarian or partisan claims as no more than an element in the life of a whole nation whose claims come first.

This is the position which India has reached now, and it is the simple truth that the solution of her political problem now depends chiefly on her own people. They have to furnish not only political aptitudes, but also the spiritual power to overcome the undeniably strong but certainly not insuperable obstacles to their national organization and national freedom which are found in India's own internal conditions. We are confident that these obstacles will be overcome, but only the future can show how they will be overcome.

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number of other interests or communities, nevertheless it is by far the strongest and most representative political organization in India. It sets the pace of the advance towards, and determines the trend and scope of, the objectives of Indian Nationalist opinion. Its policy and fortunes may, therefore, be taken as the Indian political barometer.

By origin, the All-India Congress is an offshoot of English Liberalism, or, perhaps, Radicalism, and throughout a great part of its history, from the year 1885, when it came into existence owing to the efforts of an Englishman, a former member of the Indian Civil Service, and definitely took the form and character of a political organization on the suggestion of the Viceroy, Lord Dufferin, its policy, character, and leading personalities were all typical of constitutional Liberalism. But, like every other political organization, the Indian National Congress from its very first years began to witness the rise and spread of other and rival doctrines and objectives to those with which it started. There was, in fact, from the beginning a specifically "Indian" school of thought in Congress which sought not to foster and gain control over the alien political institutions of their Western rulers, but, rather, to oust both them and those who had brought them to India, and replace them by a purely indigenous system of government administered by Indians themselves. The famines of the middle and late 'nineties, and the appearance of bubonic plague at the same time, acted, so to speak, as a catalyser which precipitated the first of the modern extremist political movements in India, and the fierce passions roused by the partition of Bengal in 1905 gave added energy and extension to the active and, indeed, revolutionary nationalist agitation which had been set on foot by the well-known Maratha

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leader, B. G. Tilak, on the extreme left of the Congress organization, and it was at the annual session of the All-India National Congress at Surat at the turn of the year 1907 and 1908 that extremism, with its creed of India for the Indians, and its technique of direct action, challenged the old constitutional doctrine and leadership of Congress to a fight to the death.

And lastly, by 1908 the tide of enthusiasm aroused in India by Japan's victory over Russia was running high. The events of the Russo-Japanese War gave a powerful fillip to the Indian Nationalist Movement and mightily stimulated the imagination and aspirations of masses of Indians who had hitherto taken no interest in politics. For many in India, horizons were widened and national objectives were multiplied, those in the economic and cultural fields coming into prominence side by side with the more familiar objectives of the old political field. Both internal and external forces were thus at work to expand and transform the ideals of Indian Nationalism, and from 1908 onwards we see the effects of these forces most vividly portrayed.



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# India and the Commonwealth

THE political progress which will be recorded in the following pages is implicit in India's membership of the British Commonwealth of Nations. During the Round Table Conference and the sessions of the Joint Select Committee of Parliament during 1933 and 1934, there was much talk about "Dominion Status" being India's ultimate political goal. Some Indians, of course, demand complete independence, whilst in some British circles there was still, at the time of the Joint Select Committee, reluctance to go as far as to admit that Dominion Status should be declared by statute to be the objective of political reforms in India. All this discussion was academic and showed a certain ignorance of British Imperial history and the fundamental principles on which the relations between the different members of the modern British Empire and Commonwealth of Nations are based. The truth is that no arbitrary limit can be set to the political growth of any unit of the British Empire. Freedom is its very essence, and every one of its component parts or peoples grows naturally into that degree of freedom for which its general progress fits it. This principle is fully illustrated, not only by the history of the Dominions but by the experience of every other unit of the Empire, and by none so clearly and decisively as by the experience of India. At different times during the nineteenth century the basic principles of democratic government had been introduced into the government



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of India by Acts of the British Parliament, the principles, namely, of the equality of all citizens before the law, of representation of the people in the Government, and of the election of the people's representatives by the people themselves. In a word, the political history of India was repeating—slowly and hesitantly, no doubt, because of peculiar circumstances—the history of those British Colonies which are now the Dominions of the British Commonwealth, and it was as certain as anything in politics could be that India would continue to reproduce the experience of the Dominions as her political development passed through the successive stages in which they had preceded her.

Similarly, just as Dominion Status—that is, full autonomous home rule—is implicit in India's membership of the British Commonwealth of Nations, so independence is implicit in Dominion Status as contained in the Statute of Westminster.

This essential connection between the political life and progress of India and that of the rest of the British Empire is shown by the relation which specific movements of progress in other British countries bear to the outstanding events in India's own onward march. Thus, Pitt's India Act of 1784, which was the first Act of Parliament to give the Crown some direct responsibility for the good government of India, and was meant, as Pitt himself said, "to give to the Crown the power of guiding the politics of India with as little means of corrupt influence as possible," was an offshoot of a reforming movement in Great Britain which gained its greatest impetus from the feelings aroused by the revolt of our American colonies. And with the nineteenth century came the introduction of certain basic principles of democracy into the system of Indian government.

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The famous Charter Act of 1833, in which the principle of the equality of all the King's subjects before the law was implicit, would not, in all probability, have done more than revise the commercial practice of the East India Company had it not been an Act of the first reformed Parliament, itself the crowning achievement of that reforming movement of which Pitt's Act was one of the earliest fruits.

We wait for nearly a whole generation before we come to the next great landmark in India's political progress, the Indian Councils Act of 1861. Much had happened, in India, in Great Britain, and in the rest of the Empire, during the years between 1861 and 1833. In this country the Chartist movement had brought the revolutionary spirit of the Continent into our politics and had made it clear that political power would have to be extended from the upper and middle classes to at any rate the town workers, and the whole movement had quickened and strengthened the natural British instinct for free and democratic government. This in turn worked powerfully in support of the movement for autonomy in the British colonies, now the Dominions, and made more swift and easy the passage to responsible self-government in which Canada was the pioneer. And so, in 1861, after the fierce storm of the Indian Mutiny, when the system of government in India demanded a thorough overhaul, the British Parliament, as though by instinct, took India at any rate to the beginning of the straight highroad of democracy, along which her colonies had already progressed so far, by bringing into the Indian constitution the principle of representation of the people. It is true that the principle was applied cautiously and only partially, but the whole effect of the Councils Act was to direct the political development of India towards the

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goal of democratic government by a representative legislature.

And, from the late 1860's onwards, the pressure on the Indian Government for political reform began to come from Indian as well as from British quarters. Indeed, by the end of the 1870's, when the second Afghan War broke out, a strongly critical Indian Press was already in existence, notably in Bengal. So outspoken was Press comment on governmental activities that special powers had to be taken to deal with it. But it proved to be the beginning of the modern Indian Nationalist movement, and from 1880 onwards organized political opinion in India hostile to the continuance of the bureaucratic regime grew continually stronger. Once more a development in India was strengthened by contemporary developments elsewhere in the Empire, for, just at this juncture, Mr. Gladstone returned to power with a keen interest in Indian affairs and a fixed determination to apply more liberal principles to the Indian Government. His appointment of Lord Ripon as Viceroy in 1881 showed this determination clearly, and one of Lord Ripon's reforms, directed towards making Europeans in India amenable under certain conditions to Indian judicial officers, was the event which brought the Indian National Congress into existence, and therewith began the long political struggle, directed towards ever wider objectives, which has persisted to the present day. And, just as the old North American colonists were helped and supported by a strong section of opinion in this country, so Indian nationalists have throughout their long contest never been without powerful and active sympathisers in Great Britain.

As the nineteenth century drew to its close it became

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more and more obvious that the pace of political change in India was being speeded up by events outside as well as inside the country, and the Indian Councils Act of 1892—like the Act of 1861, a full generation later in time than the last important political reform preceding it—was a notable step further towards the achievement of a democratic system of government, for it introduced into India the principle of election of representatives in the Legislature, these having previously been nominated. The principle of representation also was strengthened and extended, and the lines of future political development in India were thus firmly set in the direction of parliamentary responsible self-government.

With the turn of the century came the appointment of Lord Curzon as Viceroy, and with him the most notable of all the attempts to make good and efficient government a substitute for self-government. Lord Curzon's labours in administrative reform were heroic, and the machinery of Indian government became in his hands probably the most efficient of its kind in the whole world. If technical competence, justice, and benevolent intention could ever have taken the place of self-government, then the government of India, as left by Lord Curzon, would surely have done so. But the die had been cast against this consummation long ago, and, indeed, before the end of his Viceroyalty and the arrival of his successor, Lord Minto, it had become obvious that the Indian Councils Act of 1892 would no longer satisfy advanced Indian opinion. Already, too, the operations of local government bodies had begun to make Indians in the villages and fields conscious of the fact that the operations of government concerned them personally and vitally, and it is from these days that we begin to trace the rise

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of the masses as a political factor, at first inert and passive, tools to be used by others, but later more active and vocal, beginning to think and act for themselves. The story of the Morley-Minto reforms calls for separate treatment because of their outstanding importance in the story of Indian constitutional development, and because they were the theatre of the first great political clash between Hindus and Mohammedans. But here we should not fail to notice their coincidence in time with the creation of the Union of South Africa as a self-governing Dominion. Precisely the same influences were at work moulding the future political destiny of India as carried out the truly creative act of statesmanship in South Africa, and the stamp of the long British experience of imperial government is all over the Morley-Minto reforms. Indeed, the decade which saw these two things—the creation of the Union of South Africa and the Morley-Minto reforms—is like the decade which saw the Durham Report and the Union of the two Canadas, one of the great flowering periods of our Empire's history, and in it we see how the shape and quality of Indian political development are literally an offshoot of the political life of the whole British Commonwealth of Nations.

Hitherto we have been considering the influence of India's membership of the British Commonwealth on her general relations with Great Britain. But that influence does not end there. It has deeply affected the structure of the future national State of India and the constitutional relations between the Central Government of the country and every one of its constituent parts. This remark applies not only to the relations between the Central and Provincial Governments in British India, but also to those between British India and the Indian States.

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In a word, the conception of a Federation of All-India, and the possibility of translating this conception into the living, tangible form of a federal Indian nation-state, are both products of India's membership of the British Commonwealth. Like India's entry into the straight road which leads to responsible self-government of the democratic, parliamentary type, her adoption of the federal as opposed to the unitary form of constitution has come about almost unconsciously, at least in the earliest stages of the process. None of the Indian Provinces, not even the three old Presidency Governments of Madras, Bengal and Bombay, are "natural" units, either geographically or ethnically, in the sense that England, Wales and Scotland are natural units. They are all more or less accidental products of British Indian history, and the same can be said of many, if not most, of the Indian States. In other words, they are administrative units, and until the Government of India Act of 1919—for which, however, the Morley-Minto reforms paved the way—they were, for almost all administrative and governmental purposes, merely agencies of the Central Government.

But not for all purposes. As far back as 1870-1871 Lord Mayo introduced certain financial reforms which, in effect, started these subordinate provincial agencies on a march which was to end in due course at the goal of provincial autonomy in a federal India. The ideas and the spirit behind Lord Mayo's financial reforms were typically British in their practical character and in the strictly defined limits of their scope. He decentralized the collection and expenditure of certain forms of revenue for the greater convenience and economy of both the Central and Provincial Governments, and decade by decade his successors extended this scheme of decentrali-

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ation until, even before the Act of 1919, there grew up definite division of financial authority between centre and provinces. But the story does not end with this. Practical convenience was, no doubt, the immediate compelling motive which led to the initiation of this process of financial decentralization, but behind it all was the example of the States and Provinces of the other great British countries, especially Canada and Australia, where federation, carried out against fierce resistance at times from strongly individualistic colonies, was recognized as the only just and effective form of government. In sheer size, India compares with either Canada or Australia, and in the sharpness of her ethnological and political divisions she exceeds them. It is no wonder, therefore, that the ideas of successive Viceroys and Secretaries of State for India should have been moulded, at first, almost instinctively, and then consciously and of set purpose, by the experience of these other British countries until, in 1919, India became, as we shall see, a quasi-federation before any question of an All-India Federation had become a living or, apparently, a practical proposition.

And lastly, behind all these somewhat obvious influences exerted on India's political development by the experience of the other members of the British Commonwealth of Nations, were the ideas and opinions of the peoples of Great Britain and her sister self-governing Dominions. For over half a century these have exerted a steady pressure—and by no means an always silent and unseen pressure—on British imperial policy in general. And, certainly since 1918, the presence of Indian delegates at the Assembly and other meetings of the League of Nations and at meetings of the Imperial Conference have made

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a purely subordinate status for India increasingly anomalous, and, indeed, impossible. In short, there could be no greater fallacy than to regard developments in the relations between India and Great Britain as the product and concern of the movement of events and opinion in those two countries alone. On the contrary, they are an integral part of the whole grand process of the development of British imperial relations in general.



## The Morley-Minto Reforms

IN 1908 India was a strange mixture of ancient and modern, with the ancient still vastly predominant. Modern industry had made its appearance nearly half a century earlier in the cotton mills of Bombay, and by 1908 the country had a far from negligible, if still limited, industrial equipment. In Bombay City and other important centres of the Bombay Presidency the cotton industry had grown to real strength, and it had extended elsewhere in India, notably in Madras and in the United Provinces. In Bengal the jute industry was already a giant. Leather was extensively worked in the United Provinces, and wool in the Punjab. The greatest development of iron and steel in the Tata works was still to come, but, in 1908, India had long possessed an iron industry, and even exported some of the products of her foundries. A whole host of specialized Indian industries—in brass, lacquer, ivory, gold and silver, enamel, copper, and so on—were to be found throughout the length and breadth of the land, providing employment for scores of thousands. Mining industries, too, were important, and transport and engineering called for the services of large numbers of workmen.

Nevertheless, the total numbers engaged in these and other industrial activities were insignificant compared with those who worked either directly or indirectly in agriculture. India, in 1908, was still a land of villages rather than towns—as she had always been in the past

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and still is to-day—and the conditions of life of her many people were not only rural but primitive. The fall of the rain, the ripening of their crops, and the welfare of their cattle—these were the things which filled the lives and occupied the thoughts of the vast majority of Indian men and women. Government was to them something remote and incomprehensible, a natural phenomenon like the sun or the wind, whose processes they could neither influence nor control. It was enough if the lesser Government officials refrained from pressing too hardly on them, if the claims of the moneylender were not too exorbitant, and if disease and scarcity did not ravage them and their animals too cruelly.

Of the immense number of Indian villages, only a tiny proportion were on a metalled road, and fewer, far fewer, on or within very easy reach of a railway. The system of railway trunk lines ran through India from north to south and east to west, extended and magnified by a steady growing number of branch and feeder lines. But India is a very big country, and much of her surface opposes great natural difficulties to the building of railways or is too sparsely populated to make them profitable. It is the same with metalled roads. Their cost and the extent of the empty or almost empty spaces through which they must run has always imposed several limitations on their construction.

These and similar considerations apply to the building of schools and hospitals, to drainage and other forms of public works. But in the matter of irrigation of all sorts—canal, storage-tank, artesian and tube wells—India was already well provided, impressive though the growth of irrigation has been within her borders from the year 1908 until the present time.

But in spite of the growth of industry, transport, irri-

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gation, communications, education, health, and so on, in the country from 1908, India at the beginning of our survey was still quite definitely a backward country, with immense areas of her surface inhabited by a poverty-stricken people living in conditions which had not altered fundamentally in a thousand years, except in one particular. But that particular was one of literally vital importance. By 1908 it was no longer possible for famine to sweep away the inhabitants of whole great tracts of India, as it had done before the growth of irrigation and communications set inexorable limits to the effects of the vagaries of India's climate. And by 1908, too, the appalling scourges of the great epidemics—cholera, bubonic plague, smallpox and others—were being visibly held in check, and even driven back. India is not a healthy country for the most part, but the public health services have at any rate bridled the great epidemic diseases.

The comparative slowness in political and general social and economic development in India can thus be understood. But on that other side of a people's development—the intangible, unmeasurable development of the mind and spirit—there had been progress out of all proportion even to that achieved in administration and public health. Among certain classes of the population, and especially in certain parts of India such as Madras, Bengal and Bombay, Western education had made giant strides, and had, all unperceived at first, fundamentally altered the bases of British rule in India, even by 1908. It is true that the majority of the people of India are to this day uneducated and illiterate, but the reason for this is to be sought in the circumstances detailed above, in the social structure of the country (which, for example, makes it virtually impossible for the unmarried woman,

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the keystone of elementary education elsewhere, to take up work as a primary school teacher, even in her own village), and in sheer geography, which puts an appreciable proportion of the whole child population of India physically beyond the reach of organized State education.

But for over a hundred years large and ever-increasing numbers of Indians have had access to Western education from the primary to the university stages, and of these Indians the solid core has always been provided by the literary castes of Hindus, among whom learning has been not only traditional but a monopoly. To the new education they brought minds of the first quality, supremely well-fitted to acquire and use all that their Western teachers could expound to them. Mohammedans and others were slow to start in the educational race, and for that reason higher education is far more widely spread among the literary castes of the Hindus than among any others of their fellow-countrymen. In India as elsewhere, higher education is the passport to Government employment, the professions, political competence and power, and, in a word, to controlling influence in the national life. This is why Hindus occupy the more desirable posts in these various sides of national activity, in excess even of what their great numerical superiority may fairly warrant. This, also, is the reason why the nationalist political movement in India was started, and has always been controlled, by Hindus, who have furnished the vastly preponderating part of the Indian National Congress in which the movement is embodied.

For higher education in India means higher education in English, and English—as the famous Bengali Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University, the late Sir Ashutosh Mukerjee, said before the Calcutta University Commission of 1915—is the language of freedom. With the know-

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ledge of English, the golden store of English literature and the rich experience of the British way of freedom and democracy now lay at the disposal of Indian students, and the impact of that spiritual onslaught on Indian minds is written more and more clearly and largely in the thoughts and actions of Indians themselves with every decade that passes. Indeed, as the unbiased student examines the history of India from 1858 onwards, when Calcutta University was founded amid the passions and dangers of the Mutiny, he realizes that education in English has been the chief creative force in Indian nationality, and also that without English there could never have been any all-India nationalist movement or, strange as it may seem, any conception even of an Indian nation. Even in Europe the conception of nationality, as we know it to-day, is a growth of comparatively recent times, and in India it is completely absent until it was transplanted thither from its Western home.

The leading authority on the history of Indian education—both indigenous and Western—is Sir Philip Hartog, who has uncovered its story, first by the work of his educational committee which was set up in connection with the Simon Commission, and later by his brilliant monograph for the University of London Institute of Education, published in 1939. He shows how the indigenous systems of education in India, whether Hindu or Mohammedan, based as they were, on the classical languages of Sanskrit for the Hindus and Arabic and Persian for the Mohammedans, were primarily religious in objective and had no concern with secular learning. In any case it was impossible, for obvious reasons, that these languages should give access to the secular, and especially to the scientific, knowledge of the world which had made such prodigious advances since the religious

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books of the two faiths were written. With these books the Hindu and Mohammedan teachers of the pre-British era were content. To apply the famous dictum of the destroyer of the Alexandrine Library, if any later discoveries agreed with the sacred volumes, they were unnecessary; if they disagreed, they were erroneous and must be disregarded.

But the English language was the key to the storehouse of all the scientific learning of the West, as well as to the spiritual treasures of human freedom, and, in order merely to continue to live in a world inhabited by men who wielded the almost fantastic powers conferred by scientific knowledge, Indians had perforce to acquire this knowledge and use it, thereby themselves speeding up the transformation of the conditions of their lives, and, above all, remoulding their ideas concerning their own relationship to modern knowledge and their estimates of their own personal and communal objectives and powers.

And there was yet another creative rôle for the English language to play in India. It was the only possible common language for the whole country. This is not the place to discuss the linguistic fragmentation of India whose different parts have tongues not only differing from each other as English differs from Spanish, but differing from each other as English and Spanish, which are Indo-European languages, differ from Arabic, which is Semitic, or Chinese, which is Mongolian. In a sentence, the ethnic history and structure of India are paralleled by its linguistic structure, which is built from the quarries of a number of the major families of human speech. Moreover, to these different languages in India there now accrues a thick and ancient growth of tradition and passion, such as may be so clearly perceived in the fierce controversies which have raged around the question of

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extending the Hindi and Urdu languages—typical Hindu and Mohammedan tongues—which impose rigid barriers to their spread. But English was different. For purposes of education, and indeed of life in general, in the modern world, all educated Indians had to learn it, and so, at a stroke, India acquired what she had never had before, a common language, adequate for all purposes, and increasingly necessary as the country progressed in every way. From end to end of the country Indians could communicate with each other, and for no purpose was this more important and appropriate than for politics. Besides being the vehicle for political discussion, English was the very fount and source of all the ideals which Indian politicians sought to attain.

At the end of the nineteenth century, and in the first four or five years of the twentieth, Lord Curzon gave an impressive demonstration of what could be achieved by a paternal, non-democratic administration pledged to the two ideals of efficiency and public service. At that time it looked as though the bureaucratic system of government in India would persist for an indefinite period, but, it should be noticed, it was one of the most effective—from the purely administrative point of view—of all Lord Curzon's reforms which started that phase of the modern Indian nationalist movement which we know to-day. The reform in question was the separation of Eastern Bengal and Assam from the old Bengal Presidency as a separate administrative province. Bengalis saw in it an attempt to weaken the political power of the most active province, politically, in India, whilst Hindus in general saw in it an attempt to appease Mohammedans and increase their political power by creating a new province in which the deciding voice would be that of the Mohammedan community. The

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forces released by the "Bengal Partition" agitation were never again imprisoned, but grew in strength and increased their objectives with every decade that passed. Lord Curzon's Viceroyalty was, in short, a majestic illustration of the fact that half a century of education in English had produced the effects we have just been discussing.

Therefore, when the return of a strong Liberal Government to power in England after many years out of office provided an occasion for a reconsideration of the Indian Constitution, within a year or two of Lord Curzon's partition of Bengal, it was inevitable that something of these developments should be written into the new Constitution. Both Lord Morley, the Secretary of State for India, and Lord Minto, the Viceroy, found themselves in full agreement as to the desirability of some further political advances. Naturally their views differed from each other in many details, but in the end they reached a measure of agreement which is found incorporated in the Morley-Minto reforms.

These represented a considerable advance in the existing systems, an advance which is to be looked for not only in the machinery of the Central and Provincial Legislatures, but also in the spirit in which the changes were made. Thus, in enlarging the size of the Provincial Legislative Councils—up to a maximum of fifty additional members in the larger provinces and thirty in the smaller—Parliament once and for all abrogated the principle of an official majority in these councils. Henceforth, non-officials would be in the majority. Moreover, the additional non-official members added to the Provincial Councils by the reforms were to be elected by such bodies as groups of local self-governing authorities, trade associations, universities or landholders. It is true that



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such bodies as these might normally be of a conservative temperament, but it is far from true that they might normally be expected to support the Provincial Government through thick and thin. By thus extending the operation of the principle of election, and by surrendering nominated majorities in the Provincial Councils, Parliament, of set determination, took India a definite step along her road towards democratic government. In one province, Bengal, the majority of the Legislative Council was to consist henceforth of elected members. Thus the small, mostly nominated bodies set up by the Indian Councils Act of 1892 were turned into bodies large enough and representative enough to bring real interest and genuine political views and controversies into provincial administration. Moreover, greater powers of criticism and advice were given to the new Councils, and these powers were used with vigour on many occasions, notably in Bengal. Resolutions could be moved in the Councils—and later, in connection with the 1919 reforms, we shall see the importance of resolutions—points of order could be raised, and votes taken. The Indian Press, which was already strong and independent, began to take an interest in the doings of the Provincial Councils, and the publicity given to their doings tended to put the members on their mettle. Lastly, the important change was made of introducing Indians into the Provincial Executive Councils in the provinces where such bodies existed. By this change, Indians for the first time became part of the Provincial Government itself.

In the Central Legislative Council the changes were not so important. The official majority remained, but the principle of election of non-official members was extended. The most important change at the centre was that whereby for the first time—as in the provinces—Indians were

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admitted to the Executive Council, the Cabinet of India. Lord Morley took pains to defend this limitation of progress at the centre by explaining that in his opinion India was not yet ready for the control of executive functions by the Legislature, and, indeed, he declared openly that "if it could be said that this chapter of reforms led directly or indirectly to the establishment of a parliamentary system in India, I, for one, would have nothing at all to do with it." In spite of this, the Morley-Minto reforms were a definite and important step towards the goal which Lord Morley refused to visualize, and behind the changes for which he was responsible were these strong forces whose workings neither he nor any other man could control. In the upshot, the Morley-Minto reforms proved to be the bridge between the old paternal system of government in India and the open and avowed beginning of the parliamentary system made by the 1919 reforms. They were useful as a means for giving expression—particularly in the Central Legislative Council—to the ideas and aspirations of the Indian nationalist movement, and for giving scope for further growth to those principles which had already been introduced into the system of government in India and are at the base of every form of modern democracy.

But the Morley-Minto reforms were of first-class importance in the development of Indian politics for another reason. They introduced the system of "communal representation," that is, the system whereby Mohammedans vote in Mohammedan constituencies for Mohammedan candidates, and Hindus for Hindu candidates in their constituencies. This principle was written into the new Constitution against the bitter opposition of Lord Morley, but he was met by greater determination from the side of the Indian Mohammedans, who regarded the com-

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munal electorate as their prime safeguard against being swamped by the numerically superior Hindus in general constituencies. Since 1908, as the experience of the Simon Commission and the Round Table Conference and its sequelae have shown, Mohammedan insistence on this safeguard has grown stronger as the years have passed.

Even had the war not come in 1914, it is not likely that the system of government set up by the Morley-Minto reforms would have remained very long unchanged. Everything that had happened in India since the middle of the nineteenth century had made it increasingly certain that India must, sooner or later, tread the same political path as the British Dominions had trodden. The war did no more than speed up the pace of advance.

## The War, 1914-1918

BETWEEN 1908 and 1914 the growth of political opinion and political education in India was steady. The organization of the All India National Congress became more effective and ubiquitous and to counter it was the growing strength of organized Mohammedan opinion. Looking back on the Morley-Minto Reforms we see now that the stand made by the Mohammedans when the Morley-Minto Act was being shaped was a portent of great importance. To Lord Morley's great distress, he found that as the negotiations between himself and the Viceroy, Lord Minto, proceeded, Mohammedan opinion became more and more stubbornly set in its determination to insist on its own communal representation in the new legislative bodies, and nothing that Lord Morley could do was able to make any impression on the Mohammedans, and so communal representation became a feature of the Indian Constitution which has lasted to this day. In other ways, too, Mohammedans in India gave evidence that they were experiencing a communal awakening. Their great leader of an earlier generation, Sir Saiyid Ahmad, had roused them to a sense of their educational and economic shortcomings and disabilities, and now they were alive to their political disabilities also, and so we see political life in India quickening in various directions during these years. On the extreme left of the All-India National Congress and out beyond it, there was a steady growth of extremism,

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notably in Bengal, which is so well described in Sir Valentine Chirol's once famous book, *Indian Unrest*. This movement was definitely a movement of India for the Indians—actually India for the Hindus, and it was countered by a growing solidarity and determination of Mohammedan India to safeguard its own position. The visit of King George and Queen Mary to India in the winter of 1911 led to an astonishing burst of loyal enthusiasm which did much to stabilize general political opinion in India, to forge anew the ties between the Indian peoples and the Crown, and to discredit the extremists who were talking of complete independence for India. Nevertheless revolution actively persisted, and was marked by its most extreme act in those pre-war years, the attempted assassination of the Viceroy, Lord Harding, in Delhi in December 1912.

Then came the war. The first reaction to this tremendous event in India was a spontaneous rally to Great Britain's cause. The men of the fighting races flocked to the colours, and all sections of Indian opinion, except the most extreme, at any rate in the earlier stages of the war, realized that the German threat of world domination was as much a menace to India as to any other country of the British Empire. The heroism of the Indian soldiers on so many of the battle-fronts of that widespread war, and the efforts and sacrifices called for from many sections of the Indian peoples themselves, led inevitably to a revival of ideals of more extensive self-government for India, and gave undoubted strength to the arguments by which these ideals were supported. Several schemes for political advance began to be put forward, the most important of all being one jointly prepared in 1916 by the Moslem League and the All-India National Congress. This scheme, in essence, was the development of the

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Morley-Minto Reforms to their logical conclusions, and only its essential implication need be mentioned here. The Legislative and Executive would have derived their powers from, and been responsible to, different authorities—the one to an Indian electorate, the other to Parliament in London. Of course, the two mandates would have clashed sooner or later, and deadlock would have ensued. This is the system which has broken down in every one of the British Colonies where it has been tried, and the British Islands themselves suffered bitterly from just such a system in the eighteenth century when the short-lived Irish Constitution of 1782 broke down in the chaos and bloodshed of 1798.

It was clear that something different from an extension of the Morley-Minto Reforms had to be conceived, and Mr. Montagu, Secretary of State for India, gave unqualified expression to this view in the declaration which he made in Parliament in October 1917. The gist of his statement was that the goal of India's political progress was responsible self-government, to be attained by progressive stages. The magic words, "responsible government," the very words from which such stalwart democrats as Mr. Gladstone and Lord Morley had shrunk, and indeed had openly disclaimed, ended a binding declaration of policy made on behalf of His Majesty's Government.

As the war proceeded and the calls on India became more intense it was inevitable that Indian Nationalist opinion should once again make itself heard. Economically, India was not doing badly out of the war. There was a full demand for everything that she could produce whether in the form of primary or of secondary products and all these realized good prices. The manufacturing industries of the country were being fostered and developed

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by the Government as well as by private capital, and there was a certain increase in the general well-being of the people. Nevertheless, war taxation and war conditions inflicted inevitable hardships, and where there were large concentrations of industrial workers there were potential sources of discontent. In those days there was virtually no trade union legislation or organization, and the mushroom agitator thus had full opportunity for exercising his peculiar talents. With the agricultural masses, a very dangerous development was the disappearance of the silver rupee and the high price of silver bullion, which, of course, affected the age-old hoarding habits of the countryside very strongly. There was thus a good deal of floating discontent towards the end of the war, and in India, as elsewhere, the all-pervading war weariness affected the minds of the people and made them an easy prey to the political agitator, particularly the one who promised a new and better world if only Indians could be left to their own devices and their own self-government.

Mr. Montagu himself paid a visit to India to study the political situation at first-hand, and to get what ideas he could on the subject of the actual wishes and demands of the Indian political leaders as well as of the Indian Government. Out of the declaration of 1917 and of the ceaseless political thinking and argument in India and Great Britain emerged the Government of India Act of 1919.

It is safe to say that between August 1917 and December 1919 when the Government of India Act was passed, the principles which were finally embodied in the Act were subject to such a rain of criticism, both hostile and friendly, ignorant and learned, that to find a precedent for the amount of interest and the depth of feeling dis-

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played it is necessary to go back to the days of the first Irish Home Rule Bill, or the stormy days which preceded the Reform Act of 1832. The reason for this great interest on both sides is obvious. The British Parliament and people felt that in conceding the principle that the goal of Indian political progress was responsible self-government and in delegating to the control of popularly elected legislatures some of the most important departments of administration in the Provincial Government, Great Britain and India were taking a leap in the dark. Indian political leaders, on the other hand, naturally felt that the principle should have been stated more clearly and whole-heartedly, and should have been applied more generously. Moreover, the international status of India had been fundamentally affected by her position as one of the signatories of the Treaty of Versailles and as an original member in her own right of the League of Nations. Indians could argue with force and much justification that this position on the international stage was inconsistent with a position of subjection on the smaller stage of the British Empire.

But in 1919, there were other than purely political considerations involved. The aftermath of the war had shown itself in both widespread internal unrest and in a serious threat to India's safety from outside. Internally, the inevitable post-war difficulties and mal-adjustments had the effect of giving greatly increased strength to the underworld revolutionary movement which had grown with dangerous speed during the last months of the war. This underworld movement may be traced to a definite beginning in 1908 when the Bengal revolutionaries used, in a murderous outrage, bombs which had been manufactured on principles learnt in anarchist organizations in Europe. The murder of Sir William Curzon Wylie,



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by a Punjabi student, in London in 1909 brought home to the British people with sudden and startling clearness the existence and implications of the movement, which during the war of 1914-1918 was used by the Germans as an accessory to their war effort. The entry of Turkey into the war against the Allies gave some scope for agitation on the North-West Frontier and among Indian Mohammedans generally, whilst a serious situation was created in the Punjab by the return of thousands of Sikhs from Canada, the United States, and China and Japan. Most of these men were innocent of revolutionary crime, but large numbers were quite definitely agents of the Germans and of the Indian revolutionary organizations outside India, notably of the notorious "Ghadr" or "Mutiny" party, which was strongly entrenched in the United States of America. Many violent crimes were committed by these and other revolutionaries and large numbers of modern firearms were smuggled into India. The threat from the extremists was, in fact, out of all proportion to their numbers.

Then, too, in March 1919, Mr. Gandhi ordered the first general strike *hartal* as it came to be widely known—and this led in Delhi to a clash with the authorities and a number of deaths. A second *hartal* was ordered for April 6th, and in continuance of this, Mr. Gandhi tried to enter the Punjab on April 9th. He was turned back and ordered to return to Bombay. The news flew through the Punjab that he had been arrested, and at once a wave of mass violence swept over parts of the Punjab and the Bombay Presidency. Serious riots occurred, Europeans were murdered—five of them in Amritsar in the Punjab—and communications of all sorts were destroyed. The general unrest was increased by the coincidence with Mr. Gandhi's activities

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of special legislation which the Government of India had found it necessary to introduce into the central Legislature.

In 1917, a Committee, under the Chairmanship of an English judge, Mr. Justice Rowlatt, had been appointed to advise on the steps to be taken to deal with revolutionary agitation. The Committee reported in 1918, and, early in 1919, the Government of India introduced certain Bills into the Legislature which had been framed in accordance with the Rowlatt Report. These provided no more than the usual administrative precautions which are invariably taken by a Government at such crises. But an Eastern country like India is the very home of rumour, and with the passing of the Rowlatt Bills the most extraordinary caricatures of their contents gained publicity, chief among these being stories to the effect that marriage and funeral processions would now become unlawful assemblies and so liable to forcible dispersal by the military or police. The effect of such rumours was inflammatory to a high degree, and strengthened the wave of unrest and violence which, as we have seen, was sweeping over the country and causing the murder of a number of isolated Europeans. The trouble took on a violent form in Amritsar, an important commercial town in the Punjab and the headquarters of the Sikh community, and it was here that the deplorable episode of the Jallianwala Bagh occurred in which a large number of rioters were killed by machine-gun fire. This affair gave a new edge to nationalist agitation and helped to precipitate the widespread and long-drawn-out Non-Co-operation movement. But the tragedy proved to be the culminating point of the immediate post-war disturbances, for thereafter the forces of law and order were able to prevent any substantial political disturbance

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until the start of the Non-Co-operation and Khilafat movements of the next year.

But these disturbances inside India produced a most dangerous reflex on her North-West border, which, from time immemorial, had been the highway for the invasion of the country. The Amir of Afghanistan, Habibullah Khan, a firm and loyal friend of the British, was murdered early in 1919, and his successor's first act was to invade India. The invasion was quickly repelled, but it was a reminder, to British and Indians alike, of the vital need for keeping the strength of the Central Government of India intact.

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CLEARLY, in view of these very untoward conditions both inside India and on her frontiers, the new Constitution had to retain strong powers for internal and external defence in the hands of the Central Government. In the provinces the device of "dyarchy" was introduced; whilst at the centre, the main reforms consisted of increasing the numbers of the Legislature, widening the franchise, giving the popularly elected members a substantial majority over the official and nominated members in the Legislative Assembly—which is the "House of Commons" of India, the Council of State being the upper house—and immensely increasing the powers of members of the Legislature to criticize, aid, or obstruct, and, generally, to influence the policy of the Government.

By the 1919 Act the whole sphere of Government was divided into two parts—the Central and Provincial Subjects. The provincial subjects were entrusted to the new reformed Provincial Governments and included practically all the activities of government which touch the daily lives of men and women—such subjects as education, health, law and order, public works, irrigation, local self-government, industrial development, and many others. The Central Government retained these subjects which are the care of central governments the world over—defence, customs, criminal law, foreign relations, and so on. The provincial subjects were further divided into "Reserved" and "Transferred" subjects. The reserved

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subjects, the chief of which were police and finance, were administered by the Provincial Governor and his Executive Councillors, who were two or more in number and were nominated by the Crown. The transferred subjects were administered by the Governor and his Ministers, who were chosen from among the elected members of the Provincial Legislature, which was a single-house legislature known as the Provincial Council, elected on a still broader franchise than the central Legislative Assembly. The transferred subjects included all the so-called "nation-building" departments, that is, education, health, local self-government, agriculture, industrial development and others. For the administration of these transferred subjects, the Ministers were responsible to the Provincial Councils and stood or fell by the latter's votes.

It will be seen from the above that the Provincial Government fell into two distinct parts : the Governor and his Executive Councillors, or the Governor in Council, and the Governor and his Ministers. The Governor in Council was not responsible to the Provincial Legislature for his acts. He was responsible to the British Parliament via the Government of India and the Secretary of State for India. The Governor acting with his Ministers was responsible to the Provincial Legislature, and it is this division of the fabric of the Provincial Government into two parts which is called "dyarchy." Its drawbacks are obvious to any student of politics, and, as a matter of fact, dyarchy functioned with continual difficulty in Bengal and the Central Provinces, whilst it worked with reasonable ease and efficiency in several other provinces. From the first, however, some Governors tacitly treated their Executive Councillors and Ministers as a unitary government and held joint meetings of Councillors and Ministers. The real justification of dyarchy is that it was found, after the

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most intensive study by British and Indian politicians concerned, to be the only way in which Indians could gain continuous practical experience of the handling of actual administration of governmental power, and the Simon Commission later on judged that it had, on the whole, discharged the function for which it was designed.

There is one other important aspect of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms to be noted here, namely, their financial provisions. Before 1919, the revenues of the provinces were derived almost entirely from sources which they shared with the Central Government. The Reforms, however, altered all that and handed over to the provinces certain heads of revenue for their exclusive enjoyment. In practice, this meant that the Government of India would lose heavily, and, therefore, it was decided to levy annual contributions, varying according to their wealth, from the different provinces. A committee was set up under the Chairmanship of Lord Meston to allocate the contributions and the subsequent arrangement became known as the Meston Award. Naturally, this arrangement was highly unpopular with the provinces, and especially with the new Ministers who wanted all the money they could get for their "nation-building" departments, and the abrogation of the Provincial Contributions was, from the start, a prime objective of both the Central and Provincial Governments.

The new era in Indian Government and in the relations between India and Great Britain opened formally in February 1921, when the Duke of Connaught inaugurated the reforms in Delhi. The first General Elections for the new Legislatures had been held in the previous November, and the All-India Congress Party had boycotted them. The personnel of the Central and Provincial Legislatures was, therefore, of the Liberal or "Moderate"

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section of thought on the whole, and the absence of the more extreme Congressmen undoubtedly made for the smoother and more peaceful transaction of business. Nevertheless, the absence of representatives of the strongest, best-organized, and most popular party in the country prevented the new Central Legislature from developing into a true national council, as had been hoped. Further, it was partly responsible for the failure of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms to develop a true party system. No such system ever developed at the Centre, whilst in the provinces, the nearest approach to true political parties came in the Punjab and in the Madras Presidency. In the former, a genuine cleavage between urban and rural interests led to the rise of a country party which included representatives of all communities, including the domiciled European community. But the fierce inter-communal strife of 1924 and onwards put an end to this promising experiment. In Madras, too, the Justice, or Non-Brahmin Party looked for a while as though it would become a real radical party representative of the economic and social claims of the "have-nots" of all communities and interests. Communal considerations, however, proved too strong in the end, and the party came to represent mainly the claims of the non-Brahmin Hindus. In the Punjab, of course, the split came along the Hindu-Mohammedan line of cleavage, with the Sikh Community as a third disturbing element, with its own particular claims and grievances. Elsewhere, the divisions of opinion were into groups of more or less unstable cohesion and somewhat nebulous differences of policy.

The Act of 1919 is a document of high interest to students of British Imperial history, for it crystallized the long experience in the process of the devolution of governing powers which Parliament had gained since the Canada

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Act of 1791. There were reminiscences of several of the old Colonial Constitutional Acts in the Government of India Act of 1919. The composition of the Legislative Assembly and the Provincial Councils reminded us, for example, of the introduction of the principle of responsible government into New South Wales in 1842 in the form of a council one-third nominated and two-thirds elected. Certain of the provisions of the Act recalled Canadian and, still more, South African constitutional conditions.

It must be remembered that responsible government had never been specifically established in any of the Dominion Constitutions. Its introduction had been due to constitutional practices and usages based on those in force in the mother country. In Canada, after the Act of 1840, responsible government developed by the logic of events and the wisdom of Lord Elgin, and its rise in New Zealand after the Act of 1852 was just as striking an example of the apparently (but not really) haphazard way in which great constitutional changes are made by English peoples. And so it was meant to be in India. Nothing but harm could have come from trying to set down in precise language in a formal statute a system so subtle and complicated as responsible government, which indeed had assumed a different shape in each separate British dominion. The Federal Government of Australia was on a different model from the Canadian federation, and both the Australian and Canadian systems of government differed radically from that of South Africa. If the British system of responsible government had experienced such immense changes in being transplanted to the soil of Britain's own dominions, we should have expected changes of at least equal magnitude after its naturalization in the alien civilization of India,



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and the outstanding merit of the 1919 Act, and the political practice based thereon, was that these changes could flow naturally as conditions and experience showed them to be necessary and appropriate.

The 1919 reforms gave rise to something like the beginning of a federal system for India, in the separation of the spheres of the Provincial and Central Governments. In certain subjects of government, including those of the highest importance for the moral and material uplift of their peoples, the provinces were now, for all practical purposes, masters in their own house. To the Central Government was left Imperial business, external defence, and such subjects as criminal law, customs duties, currency and the like, which from their character were incapable of being developed on any authority smaller than the national authority. The Central Government was the co-ordinating and safeguarding power over all India and existing conditions, as we have seen, prevented any actual delegation of responsibility to the Central Legislature. Nevertheless, the latter had been taken into partnership in the Government of India, and in many ways had the reality of power without its outward form.

In the provinces many important subjects of government, as we have already seen, had been made over bodily to the control of the legislatures acting through Ministers. Local self-government, practically all education, hygiene, agriculture, and other vitally important subjects were now in the hands of elected Indian non-officials. Also, the so-called "reserved" subjects could not, from the nature of things, be altogether reserved from the influence, more or less direct, according to circumstances, of the Provincial Legislatures. The whole spirit of the reforms and the logic of events must inevitably have forced the Executives in the provinces and the Central Government

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to look to the Legislatures for sanction and support for their actions, to Legislatures, that is, which all had an elected majority and in which the Government was face to face with Indian opinion and could not shirk the issue.

Lastly, Indians had been admitted to the Central and Provincial Executive Councils in every province, and were thus part of the very mainspring of the administration.

What were the true tasks before these Legislatures? In the first place let it be said definitely that they were not concerned with sweeping and spectacular constitutional changes. A certain amount of adjustment there had to be. The powers of the two houses of the Central Legislature had to be accurately delimited as their experience grew. The scope of the responsible half of the Provincial Governments would advance here and recede there according to the play of events. There would be continual adjustments between the Central and Provincial Governments and so on. But all these were nothing more than the growth of the new Constitution according to its designers' wishes and were not to be confused with the big questions of politics around which the main battles had raged. Responsible government and all that it included were acknowledged by all parties to be the legitimate goal of Indian aspiration. The problem, as we have seen, was one of gradually adapting the institutions of responsible government to the conditions of India, above all, to the dominating condition of India's disunity at that time.

There then was the immediate field of work for Indian Legislatures . . . to bring into existence conditions which favoured the unity in aim and sentiment of the different communities, castes, tribes and divisions of India. There were many sides from which this problem of India's unity could be attacked by her own sons, and comparatively

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very little which could be done by an alien Government. The strong hand of British rule could ensure that the peace was kept throughout the land, but at the best it could only maintain a mechanical unity. Real fusion had to be of the people themselves and in the conditions set up by the Reforms they had their opportunity at last.

But the 1919 Reforms still left many problems to be solved. The map of India would have to be partly redrawn. The existing provinces were mainly haphazard divisions whose reason for existence was administrative convenience. But there were strong forces of racial sentiment and language which were likely, in the future, to demand their realignment, a process allowed for in the 1919 Act. There was, again, the thorny problem of federal taxation which had to be solved; the replacement of communal by some other form of representation could only be effected by the free choice of those concerned, and there were powerful forces hostile to democracy which had to be curbed. The existing state of the relations between the Hindu and Mohammedan communities struck at the very heart of Indian unity, and anxious thought and work were called for in that respect. Those were problems already knocking at the doors of the Indian Legislatures.

A wise agricultural and local self-government policy in the provinces, a policy directed to harmonizing the conflicting elements in the atoms of the social structure, in freeing the peasant from debt, in cleansing the villages and lifting the scourge of preventable diseases, in raising the status of the depressed classes and in improving the lot of women, could exercise an immense influence for good. The power to do all this was in the hands of the Provincial Legislatures, and it was the power to remove much that embittered communal relations and kept immense numbers of women and low-caste men for all

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practical purposes out of the body politic. The Provincial Legislatures had the power then to educate children and to make citizens of them. They could build roads to link hamlets with market towns and enable produce to be dragged economically to market in carts instead of being carried on the heads of men and boys. Every measure by which they raised the economic status of their peasants was a work of quite incalculable value in destroying the forces which made for disunion between class and class and between one community and another.

The Central Legislature could tackle the problem of India's growing industrialization. It could see that India profited by the hard experience of England. It could initiate and carry social legislation, which the English officials could do only with difficulty and perhaps against the deadweight of unreasoning prejudice. There were customs which would have to be abolished, barriers which would have to be broken down, privileges of caste and position which would have to go before India could be a nation. A sound and real public opinion had to be formed, and its baser elements—the reptile Press and merely communal and separatist agitation—had to be purged, work again for the people themselves by means of their representatives. That was what was necessary.

## The Working of the 1919 Reforms

THE year 1919 was a great turning point for India in more than the strictly political sphere. The war of 1914-1918 was one of those great historical events which not only vastly accelerate the speed of change and development, but produce also a change in the organization and structure of the subject of such change and development. Hundreds of thousands of Indians had served on foreign battlefields from France to China, and India herself had been in the forefront of the world struggle as a combatant of the first rank and magnitude. Thus she had been open to all the emotions and influences, and the strains and stresses both spiritual and material which beset a country at war. In a thousand subtle and imperceptible ways the minds of her people had been influenced and their ideas changed, broadened, and turned into new channels and directed towards new objectives. The fierce light of war had shone on every part of her economic equipment and the effort of war had, within five years, enlarged and improved this to a greater extent perhaps than the previous quarter of a century had done. In a word, India had been brought by the war into the main stream of the world's life and she could never again slip into a backwater. This meant that every detail of her organization, political, economic, and social, had to be overhauled and, as resources and human capabilities

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permitted, brought abreast of the modern conditions and leading international position in which she would find herself henceforth.

Nothing less than this was the task which faced the Government of India and the leaders of the Indian peoples at the end of the Great War, and the new system of government contained in the 1919 Act could at any rate serve as a starting-point for this great departure. From the Indian point of view, one of the rules for the working of the new Legislatures was of especial importance. This was the rule relating to the moving of Resolutions by members of the Central and Provincial Legislatures. The Resolution in India is like the Motion of a private member of Parliament, only, in India, there is much more opportunity for a private member to move a Resolution and have it carried to a decision one way or other than there is for the corresponding procedure in Parliament. The Resolution, therefore, has proved to be an excellent means for giving expression to the needs and aspirations of all shades of political thought represented in the Indian Legislatures, and the Governments too, both Central and Provincial, have found Resolutions natural ways of hammering out new policy, for they are an excellent instrument for bringing the force of public opinion to bear on Government measures and policy, and, also, for indicating fairly exactly the strength of that opinion in any particular matter.

Between 1921 and the meeting of the Round Table Conference in London in 1930, the main battle between the Government of India and their chief opposition—the Congress Party—the main constitutional and political battle, that is, was fought out in the Legislative Assembly by way of Resolutions moved by leading members of the Congress Party. Indeed, the one important enquiry into

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the working of the 1919 Act which was undertaken before the statutory enquiry by the Simon Commission, was that carried out by a Committee appointed by the Viceroy, Lord Reading, in 1924, and this was the direct consequence of a resolution moved by Pandit Motilal Nehru, the leader of the Congress Party, in the Legislative Assembly, for, it should be noted, the Congress Party decided to stand for election to the Legislature at the second general elections which were held in November 1923.

Similarly, in the very important sphere of law, particularly criminal law, certain anomalies, and, even, injustices which had come down as a survival from the old days of purely autocratic government, formed the subject of Resolutions and were remedied by legislation. A great overhaul of the Indian legal system was set on foot by the new Legislatures, and the great Civil and Criminal Codes were reviewed and modified where necessary, whilst commercial, mercantile, and other legislation governing specific interests was brought abreast of modern conditions. Restrictive Press Acts were attacked and abolished in the first session of the reformed Central Legislature, and even the sacrosanct subject of Army administration was brought under critical and effective review. The scope of the Resolutions and the consequent influence exerted by the elected members of the Legislatures widened continually; and although many of these Resolutions were unreasonable, and some even vexatious and malicious, nevertheless they formed one of the most powerful and fruitful influences in the political education and development of India.

In the economic field, the interest taken, and the pressure exerted, by the Legislatures, more especially the Central Legislature, were continuous and cumulative. Already,

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in the crucial field of tariff-making, a convention of the highest importance was established on the inauguration of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms. This Convention was to the effect that there should be no intervention by the British Government and Parliament in Indian fiscal affairs when the Government of India and its Legislatures were in agreement with each other. It is true that this Convention was subject to the condition that the Secretary of State for India could interfere if he thought it necessary to do so for the purpose of "safeguarding the international obligations of the Empire or any fiscal arrangements within the Empire to which His Majesty's Government may be a party." In practice, however, the Convention was never disturbed. The Ottawa agreements of 1932 had to be ratified by the Indian Legislature in the first place, and, after having been so ratified and having remained in operation for some time, were abrogated by the same Legislature. On more than one occasion the Secretary of State withstood strong attempts on the part of organized interests in Great Britain to get him to modify the Indian Tariff, and, in fact, India has had, to all intents and purposes, complete fiscal autonomy from 1921 onwards.

Inside the provinces, the economic equipment and resources of the country have steadily extended during the past thirty years. The last census taken in India, the census of 1931, classifies the vast majority of the people of all India as rural, and shows that about 80 per cent of the total population of the country still get their living directly from agriculture and the industries subsidiary to it. In the provinces, therefore, such problems as those of the development of scientific agriculture, agricultural finance, land tenure, co-operative societies, rural indebtedness, and—above all, in a land of capricious rainfall like India—irrigation, are of supreme importance. One simple



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illustration will show what progress has been made since the beginning of this century towards the general objective of the economic welfare of the masses of India, an objective in which all problems are but individual elements. In 1899, a great famine ravaged parts of the country causing immense suffering and much loss of life. Twenty years later, a more serious scarcity of rain than that of 1899 led to a widespread failure of harvests, yet so much stronger was the economic system in this later crisis that the number of people who applied for Government relief was only a little over 10 per cent of the number who applied in 1899. And, since 1919, the situation has still further improved. This is not to say that the economic position of the masses in India is good, or, even, on the whole, satisfactory. But the story of economic change and development in India since 1908 is a record of definite progress, and with growing economic strength and security we can trace, though less easily, growth in political experience and competence. When we consider that modern scientific irrigation in India really began in 1819 with the re-opening of the Mogul Emperor Shah Jehan's canal to the north of Delhi, that between 1819 and the passing of the 1919 Act roughly seventy-four million pounds had been spent, and that between 1919 and the beginning of the second World War well over fifty million pounds have been spent on irrigation, it is not difficult to see how quickly and radically the conditions of life for rural India have been improved.

Much has been written on the connection between the economic prosperity and the political development of countries and peoples, and here it is only necessary to point out that the masses of the Indian peoples, like those of any other country, will attain political competence and maturity only *pari passu* with the building up of the

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economic foundations of their life, and that when we examine the economic history and conditions of India since 1908, we are, in fact, examining also some of the most important springs of her political life. It is, unfortunately, true that no very satisfactory material exists for any valid computation of average income per head in India, and the comparisons which are so often seen between the average income in India and the average income in some other countries are completely useless from the scientific point of view. Nevertheless, competent economists, whether British or Indian or foreign, whether officials or non-officials, all agree that during the past three or four decades there has been a noticeable increase in the average real income in India. This judgment is confirmed by a study of the demand for consumption goods in the country. In addition to increased consumption of essentials of food and clothing, there has been a steady rise in the consumption of "conventional" necessities, in expenditure on travel, and in the volume of savings of all sorts. Moreover, the steady, if slow, improvement in health, in infantile mortality figures, and in the expectation of life which has been going on throughout the present century, all point to the same conclusion, namely, that the economic and social conditions of the peoples of India should develop so as to guarantee solid material foundations for her political life and progress. To a large and increasing extent the amelioration of Indian economic and social conditions must be the work of the Provincial Legislatures and Governments.

As we study the working of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms we see the Provincial Legislative Councils, through their Ministers, evolving policies for local self-government, primary and secondary education, small industries, rural co-operation, agricultural development, and the like. In

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one or two provinces, notably the Punjab, we see opinion in the Councils divided, not by communal interests, but by differences of opinion of vital necessity to the agricultural masses of their provinces. Even the work of dyarchy itself provides us with interesting comparisons between one province and another, for in no two provinces did it assume exactly the same shape, and it is worth while spending a few moments in examining how the process of delegating responsibility to the Provincial Legislatures—which was the essence of dyarchy—was carried out. The 1919 Act still left the Governor of the provinces as the master mechanic who was to keep the somewhat delicate machinery of dyarchy in running order. This did not mean that his functions were limited to those of a *Deus ex machina*. The administration of a province is not made up of political crises. The daily round comprised for the most part routine business and small affairs of departmental policy. In all this, the Governor took an active and decisive share and his wishes and personality entered largely into the provincial administration. Not only did Executive Councillors and Ministers bring their more important problems before him, but the permanent heads of departments of transferred as well as reserved departments had regular access to him and acquainted him with all the affairs of their departments which they thought he ought to know. No officer of an imperial service, for example, could be transferred from one district or from one appointment to another without his consent. Quite apart, then, from his powers of veto and certification, the Governor was the real head of the provincial administration.

But the Governor's control over his Ministers was different in kind from his control over his Executive Councillors and heads of departments. The Governor

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could direct action to be taken in regard to the administration of transferred departments otherwise than in accordance with the advice of his Ministers, but in any difference of opinion with the Governor the Minister had a very powerful weapon in his hands—resignation. There had been much misconception of this subject of the Governor's control over Ministers and evidence given before the Muddiman Committee revealed much soreness on the part of the ex-Ministers with regard to it. Under the 1919 Act the Governor was not meant to be an ordinary constitutional Governor. He was in a real sense the head of the Government of his province and must have had many of the powers which in a fully responsible system of government would have belonged to the Prime Minister.

Naturally, the reserved and transferred departments continually impinged on each other, and there was constant necessity for joint action between the two halves of the Provincial Government. This, of course, gave ample opportunity for the exercise of influence by Ministers over the administration of reserved subjects. In Madras and Bengal, for example, attempts were made to establish a practically unitary system of government, the Governor, Executive Councillors, and Ministers meeting together regularly to discuss provincial policy. In the central provinces all important matters of policy were discussed at joint meetings, whilst in the Punjab there were regular weekly meetings of both halves of the Provincial Government at which each Minister or Councillor present brought up questions which he thought ought to be discussed in common. In all these provinces it was not an uncommon thing, when a conflict of opinion arose, to find a Minister siding with an Executive Councillor and vice versa. But, of course, the lack of organized and stable political parties

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and well-defined party "platforms" made joint responsibility of the Ministers impossible, and so to that extent derogated from the office which Ministers might otherwise have exercised. The Provincial Legislatures, in the meantime, certainly played their part in criticizing ministerial policies, and provincial Governors, on many occasions, deferred to the Legislatures' criticisms even of the reserved departments. Unfortunately, two strong influences were at work in provincial politics throughout the currency of the 1919 Reforms. These were, first, financial stringency, which led to very great friction of opinions between the transferred and reserved halves of the Provincial Governments, since finance was a reserved subject, and Ministers anxious to proceed with "nation-building" schemes were often suspicious of the inability of the finance department to find the necessary money. The second influence referred to was communal antagonism. One example of how this antagonism vitiated provincial politics may be quoted from the Punjab. After the Multan riots in September 1922, the Hindus, alarmed at their position, looked about for allies. Just at that time the Punjab Government introduced a Gurdwara Bill to try to settle the Akali Sikh movement which started as an attempt to reform the administration of Sikh Gurdwaras or temples. But by November 1922 when the Bill was introduced this movement had changed profoundly in character and had become a revolutionary agitation of a dangerous kind. The Government Bill naturally did not meet the extreme claims now put forward by the Akalis and most of the Sikh members of the Provincial Council had no intention of supporting it. The Hindus had previously opposed the Akali movement because many of the priests in charge of Sikh Gurdwaras were Hindus, and, in view of the character which the Akali movement had assumed, they

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would normally have supported this Bill. Now, however, they joined hands with the Sikhs and threw it out because they wanted Sikh support against the Mohammedans.

Nevertheless, the Provincial Councils were able to do a fair amount of constructive work. Looking through the provincial records one sees that their activity in the 1919 Act was devoted more to the subject of local self-government than to any other single item, and had centred in the regulation of municipalities and district boards (which did for rural areas what municipalities did for urban areas). There are seven hundred and fifty-seven municipalities in British India but only eighteen million out of two hundred and fifty million people live in them. When it is remembered that Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras alone held more than three million people, the average Indian municipality was seen to be of only moderate size.

The general trend of provincial legislation since 1921 has been towards the reconstitution of all these units of local self-government, both urban and rural, in a more democratic form. The franchise has been lowered and the number of elected members increased. Direct election has been introduced into the district boards, and everywhere there has been a steady movement towards the replacement of official by un-official control. This movement had been carried furthest in the United Provinces where there were no official presidents of district boards. Before the Reforms the magistrate of the district was usually president of the district board. In some provinces legislation had been undertaken to enable local bodies to increase their powers of taxation. In Madras, for example, local bodies could impose taxes on amusements and entertainments.

A very noteworthy feature of local self-government legislation since the Reforms has been its extension to

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the villages, where attempts have been made to invest the Panchayats of Committees of Elders with definite powers. The Punjab Panchayat Act gave the Committee powers to settle local disputes and to take measures for the sanitation of the villages. In the United Provinces a similar Act enabled them to deal with petty civil suits and to settle minor cases under the Cattle Trespass Act and the Village Sanitation Act. In Madras, too, the Panchayat system was said to be popular, whilst in other provinces like Bihar and Orissa and Bengal, powers had been given for the creation of Village Unions and the constitution of Union Boards on an elective basis. These Union Boards have functions not unlike our own Parish Councils and were reported to be working satisfactorily. The chief obstacle to the progress of this branch of legislative activity was the strong disinclination of the villagers to the taxation imposed by these local units.

Much attention was devoted to education and every province in India introduced compulsory primary education in certain areas, but in view of the vast numbers of the population and the difficulties in the way of their education, which have already been noticed, many years must elapse before the provincial educational policies bear their full fruit.

An examination of the Acts passed and resolutions accepted by Provincial Councils during the past five years revealed a striking dearth of any which bore directly on the economic welfare of the masses, particularly of the rural masses. Industrial development was a transferred subject, but the Central Government could exercise supervision over industrial affairs when this was considered expedient. Every province had its Department of Industries under the control of a Minister, and in each one a beginning had been made in extending technical

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education and fostering new or nascent industries. This was really all that the provinces could do in this respect, since general legislation on the conditions of labour in factories and mines and on trade unions rested with the Central Government. But in agriculture, a subject over which the Provincial Legislatures had direct control, the record of these years is disappointing. The total expenditure of all provincial agricultural departments never exceeded about  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per acre per annum. In certain provinces, notably Bengal, the United Provinces, and Bihar and Orissa, attempts had been made to reform tenancy laws with the object of improving the economic position and the status of tenants.

The most fruitful action on behalf of rural welfare had been accomplished through the agency of the co-operative societies, which in all provinces had been transferred to the control of Ministers. Through these societies a good deal of quiet constructive work had been carried on. Their membership and capital grew steadily, and one of their primary objects was the encouragement of thrift by collecting small shares, receiving deposits and attempting to induce members to make compulsory contributions for special purposes. Agricultural non-credit societies were extending their operations every year. They undertook the joint sale of agricultural produce, the production and sale of implements and manures, the furtherance of irrigation projects, and the consolidation of holdings. They opened dispensaries and schools; they assisted the agricultural departments in spreading improved methods of cultivation; they maintained communications and built new roads. The co-operative movement had its own individual features in each province. In Madras, building societies, helped by the Government, were very active; cultivators had formed societies to enable them to hold



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up their crops for a favourable market and the co-operative movement was spreading among the depressed classes. Bombay had developed co-operative banking, and implement societies, which hired and maintained expensive agricultural machinery. In Assam the Department of Agriculture had been amalgamated with the Co-operative Society. Some of the money-lenders of Bengal had even taken to investing money in the co-operative societies, and in Bihar and Orissa a society had been formed to undertake farming on a large scale. In the Punjab, particular attention was being paid to the consolidation of holdings and much valuable work had been done already in this respect. In one village which was consolidated, the rent of the area treated was reported to have doubled. A mortgage bank, assisted by the Government, had been opened to provide long-term credit for redeeming the heavy mortgage debt of the province and to finance large schemes of agricultural expansion. A very promising feature of the co-operative movement everywhere was the growing number of voluntary workers.

Nevertheless, these achievements in economic and social improvement made by the Provincial Legislatures under the 1919 Act were no more than the merest foreshadowing of what such bodies might accomplish with greater powers under another system—such a system, in fact, as was to come into existence under the Act of 1935.

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BUT, while the provinces were thus dealing with their own subjects of administration, struggling with their own particular difficulties, and making the mistakes inevitable to inexperience, a big political battle was being fought out at the centre. At first this battle mainly took the form of a violent attack on the foundations of all constitutional government, an attack summed up in the Non-Co-operation cum Khilafat cum Sikh agitations, complicated by the dreadful Moplah rising in South India—the most fearful of all the explosions of Hindu-Mohammedan enmity—and by the rising tide of general inter-communal troubles which were the aftermath of the Moplah rebellion and the break-up of the Non-Co-operation movement. Throughout the three years of the life-time of the first Legislative Assembly, which was elected at the end of 1920, the new Constitution was fighting for its life and public attention was concentrated perforce on what was happening outside the walls of the Legislatures. We have seen the beginnings of the great post-war political agitations, and although 1919 was perhaps the most dangerous year, because of the general weakness left by the strain of war and the highly explosive character of public feeling induced by the events culminating in the Jallianwala Bagh affair and the Afghan War, the events of the years immediately following were of painful and, at times, of critical importance.

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By the time the 1919 Reforms came into operation at the beginning of 1921, the combined Non-Co-operation and Khilafat movement had grown to great strength, and the Sikh trouble in the Punjab had raised its head. This latter began as a purely religious movement by devout Sikhs to release some of their temples and other holy places from the virtual ownership of private persons, of whom some were not even Sikhs, but it was quickly taken over by political extremists and turned into a part of the general anti-Government campaign. It is not easy for the Western mind to understand the thoughts and feelings which gave such force to their strange and formidable assault on the foundations of settled government in India, represented by the Non-Co-operation movement, which drew its strength from these various major communities in the country. National aspirations, stronger and more general than ever before in India; the pinch of economic conditions; war weariness and the vague uneasiness which accompanied it, and the desire, common to nearly all human beings, for change merely as change; these were all on the surface and were comprehensible enough. But when Mr. Gandhi appealed to the age-old and almost instinctive traditions of Hinduism, to the fundamental antagonism between the Hindu way of life and the bustling materialism of the European who mistakes the illusions of the senses for reality, he was going where no Englishman could follow him.

Also, many of the charges made by Mohammedan agitators were such as could not be met by appeals to reason and bare statements of fact. Then, too, currents of opinion were setting in towards the people of India from all quarters, impalpable as the air which they breathed. A colossus of government had crashed to ruins in Russia. In Japan, as a Japanese scholar had recently told an

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American audience, "the new spirit that was gaining ground in Europe and America rushed into the Island Empire like an avalanche; democracy and liberty were much on the lips of the people." Events in Ireland were being daily discussed in the Indian Press, whilst in Egypt methods similar to those employed by Non-Co-operation in India were believed to have had the results which the latter movement set before itself. These all worked on Indian minds and contributed to the great ferment of feeling in which Hindus and Mohammedans for a while sank their ancient differences and presented a united front against the Government. Non-Co-operation developed, in its essential character, into more than a political movement based on the Punjab events of 1919 and the Khilafat agitation for the amelioration of the terms of the treaty of peace with the Turks. It soon spread far beyond these things and became, among large numbers of Indians, a state of mind, a revulsion not only from British rule in India, but from all the activities of that rule, even the most beneficent, like education which was largely boycotted. The greatest Indian writer of modern times, Sir Rabindranath Tagore, summed up all this side of the Non-Co-operation movement when he said, "The idea of Non-Co-operation is political asceticism. Our students . . . are bringing their offerings of sacrifice to what? Not to a fuller education, but to a non-education. It has at its back a fierce joy of annihilation, which at its best is asceticism and at its worst is that orgy of frightfulness in which the human nature, losing faith in the basic reality of normal life, finds a disinterested delight in a mere devastation, as has been shown in the late war. . . . The anarchy of mere emptiness never tempts me."

So, when the new Constitution was inaugurated, it had no chance of being judged on its merits by the very

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influential body of men who led the Non-Co-operation movement all over India. Normally, no matter how extreme their views might have been, they would have fought the moderate politicians for the control of the new electoral machinery and would have tried to use it to attain their own objects. But the state of mind which the Non-Co-operation movement had induced prevented this. The new Constitution was to be boycotted simply because it was foreign, and thus the new Legislatures were deprived at first of much of their representative character, and the political leaders whose doctrines made the most forcible appeal to the imagination and passions of the common folk stayed outside to conduct a violent campaign against the Government.

Naturally, this state of mind led to popular outbreaks. Riots and outbreaks in gaols occurred and political strikes took place among the employees of railway and inland water transport lines. The economic condition of India was deteriorating at this time. The first wild boom of the post-war period was over. Indian exports shrank, internal prices were high, the monsoon of 1920 had been a complete failure and the whole year was one of unprecedented economic restlessness in India. Numbers of mushroom labour unions sprang up, many of them having a strong and totally irrational anti-Government bias.

Amid such circumstances, the Reforms started to function, surely almost the most unfavourable in which any democratic form of government had ever come to birth. What could the Government and moderate-minded Indians oppose to the sweeping promises of the agitators and the fierce emotions which had been roused among the masses, save counsels of reason and an appeal to work the new Constitution, whose great promise and nation-building power could only be known through its working

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by men free of bias and anti-social prejudice? And even its first fruits could not be reaped at once because of the general financial stringency from which India suffered in common with most of the rest of the world, and to a greater extent than almost any other country, for, with the slender resources of an Asiatic community, the Indian Government had to meet the manifold needs of a modern progressive state. In short, nearly all the conditions for making a success of the Reforms were lacking, all save the fixed determination of the Indian Government, of Parliament, and of a devoted section of Indian politicians that they should be made a success. To this and to the immense inherent vitality of the Reforms themselves is due the fact that the new Constitution was not stillborn.

The first elections to the new legislatures, which were held in November 1920, provided the stage for the first great clash between Moderates and Non-Co-operators. In their attempt to make the elections an utter failure, the Non-Co-operators failed, but out of almost a million electors for the Assembly, only about 182,000 polled their votes. The voting for the Provincial Councils was better, about 31 per cent of votes being cast, whilst for the Council of State more than half the electors voted. Seven hundred and seventy-four seats in the Central and Provincial Legislatures had to be filled, and for only six of these was there no candidate. Five hundred and thirty-five seats were contested with an average of three candidates per seat. The boycotting policy was most successful in the Punjab, the United Provinces, and Bombay, but this was the result of a good deal of intimidation as well as persuasion. A description of a complete boycott is given by Sir Valentine Chirol in *India Old and New*: "About fifteen miles out we reached the big village of Soraon . . . almost a small township . . . in which

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there seemed little to suggest that this was the red letter day in Modern India. . . . Still, the small Court House, we found, had been swept and garnished for use as a polling station. Two small groups of people stood listlessly outside the building, the candidates' agents on one side of the entrance, and on the other the *patwaris*, the village scribes who keep the official land records, brought in from the different villages to attest the signatures and thumb marks of the voters. Inside, the presiding officer with his assistants sat at his table with the freshly prepared electoral roll in front of him and the voting paper to be handed to each voter as he passed into the inner sanctuary in which the ballot boxes awaited him. But voters there were none. From eight in the morning till past twelve not a single voter had presented himself . . . nor did a single one present himself in the course of the whole day."

In Madras, however, the people simply revolted against the Non-Co-operation ideas, for there the non-Brahmins, the most numerous part of the population, were well led, partly organized, and had a distinct political consciousness, the result of years of agitation against Brahmin domination. They meant to capture their Provincial Council and all the seats in the Legislative Assembly which were open to them, and use the power thus gained for their communal advantage. They succeeded in this, and formed a solid party in the Madras Council, with the result that they were able to achieve many of their objects.

The composition of the various Legislatures returned by the first electors was a commentary on the state of things just described. For the most part the members were Moderates, land-holders, men of independent views, and politicians like the non-Brahmins of Madras, who were neither Moderates nor Non-Co-operators but waiters on

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events and opportunities. If these men represented only a part of Indian opinion, it was at any rate a sober and responsible part, and among them were some of the ablest men in India. The entry of the Non-Co-operators might, in the circumstances, have been bought at too great a price, for there were some questions—notably those arising out of the events in the Punjab in 1919—awaiting the attention of the first Assembly and Councils and their discussion might very easily have led to a display of mere race hatred. It is quite possible that had the extremists captured the Legislatures, this is precisely what would have happened, and passions might have been aroused which would have proved fatal to the success of the Reforms for years to come. But, as it was, the first Reformed Legislatures were allowed to function harmoniously.

Actually, the new Central Legislature was able to do much of political importance, including the repeal of restrictive Press Acts, the carrying out of reforms in Criminal and Civil Law, the conclusion of a satisfactory agreement in the winding up of the Jallianwala Bagh and other outstanding events in the 1919 troubles, and the adoption of a sound and statesmanlike attitude towards the Government's attempts to restore the general political situation in the country. The moderation of the members of the Legislature, and the conciliatory efforts of the Government, did, in fact, confer on the Legislature a prestige and influence which undoubtedly went far to persuade the Non-Co-operators that they were making a serious mistake with their policy of boycott.

But much had to happen before the progressive wing of the All-India National Congress was able to defeat Mr. Gandhi and his "no-changers," and convince the majority of Congress men that the centre of gravity of



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India's political life was now inside, and not outside the Legislatures. Throughout 1921 and the greater part of 1922, the No-Co-operation and Khilafat agitations grew in strength, whilst the Sikh trouble was to cause anxiety for a longer period still. The scope of the agitation was revealed by a speech made by Mr. Gandhi early in 1921 in which he said "To-day we are ruling India. The Government cannot cajole anybody. . . . I positively assert that we are ruling India to-day." In order to give practical effect to this statement, the two brothers, Mahommad Ali and Shaukat Ali, who were leading the Khilafat movement issued a command, purporting to carry with it religious sanctions, ordering all Moham-medans in the Army and Police to leave the services forthwith. They were arrested for this, and Mr. Gandhi was arrested early in 1922. But India was in a state of extreme unrest by this time and the Moplah rebellion which had broken out in August 1921 had brought something very like civil war to a part of the country. In Malabar, in the South, Hindus had been murdered or forcibly converted to Islam, their temples, homes, and villages had been destroyed and looted, communications had been destroyed, and, generally, fertile and flourishing areas had been temporarily reduced to ruin and destitution.

Yet, an unbiased survey of the events of these years shows the Moplah rising as the turning point of the Non-Co-operation and Khilafat movements. The consciences of thoughtful men were stirred all over the country, and many even of the rank and file began to understand that other parts of India might match Malabar in the fury and scope of its fanatical outburst. Moreover, the enrolment of bands of "National Volunteers," many of whom were genuine enthusiasts and many of whom were merely using

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politics as a cloak for ordinary crime, frequently brought the peace-loving citizen himself into conflict with the agitators and caused wide-spread fears of a general collapse of law and order. Also, the revival of Hindu-Mohammedan enmity in its more active forms in 1922, in different parts of the country but particularly in the Punjab and on the Frontier, was another pointer to the dangers of long-continued agitation on the scale and of the kind organized by the leaders of the Non-Co-operation and Khilafat movements. Consequently, the arrest of Mr. Gandhi, and the assumption by the Government of India of special powers to deal with lawlessness, provoked a favourable reaction, and during 1922 Non-Co-operation steadily declined. The Mohammedan side of the movement—the Khilafat agitation—died a natural death with the peaceful settlement of the post-war problems in issue between Great Britain and Turkey, and by 1923 the frontal attack on constitutional government had spent itself, at any rate for the time being. And with the entry of Congress men into the Legislatures at the elections of 1923, the struggle was transferred from the streets of India's towns and villages to the Legislatures set up by the 1919 Act. That is to say, by the beginning of 1924 the new legislative bodies had established themselves, against fierce and sustained assault, as the undeniable centre of gravity of the country's political life. It was, in fact, tacitly recognized, even by Congressmen, that effective political action was no longer possible except within these constitutional provisions for such action.

Nevertheless, the next attempt to force their views on the Government which was made by the more extreme wing of Indian politicians was perhaps even more dangerous than the violent frontal attack of the combined Non-Co-operation, Khilafat, and Sikh agitations. It took

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the form, as its exponents themselves described it, of "wrecking the Reforms from within." Briefly, the tactics were to capture a majority of seats in the different legislative bodies and then by automatic opposition to bring the entire work of these bodies to a standstill. The Act of 1919 contained provisions for such a contingency. If it were found impossible to continue the dyarchic system, then the Governor of the province was to assume full control of all the functions of provincial government and govern by executive fiat. The dangers of such a state of affairs are, of course, at once apparent to any student of politics, and it is clear that in the event of a breakdown of the new Constitution extremists all over the country would find unparalleled opportunities for further agitation and disorganization.

On the whole, however, the system held firm. Only in Bengal and the Central Provinces were the Congressmen able to bring the working of dyarchy to a standstill, there was always enough opposition to these merely wrecking tactics to enable the Governors to find representative ministries with sufficient support in the legislative body to carry on their work, and, as we shall see, by 1926 one of the periodical splits in the Congress ranks had developed so far as to nullify the policy of merely negative opposition.

In the Central Legislature, however, or, more accurately, in the Legislative Assembly, the attempt to make the working of the new Constitution impossible was pressed with vigour and imagination. The Congress representatives formed a strong bloc which needed only comparatively little support from other groups of members to have a majority against the Government. For some time this support was forthcoming, notably from a more or less organized group calling themselves the Independent

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Party. This was a passing phase, however, and such joint action as there was between these groups or sections never developed into a firm coalition. But the Congress members knew that they could count with certainty on the support of enough members of the Assembly to give them a majority on any demand for further political reforms, or any censure of the Government for using the special powers conferred on it by law for dealing with subversive agitation or terrorist activities. Consequently, they concentrated their energies at these vulnerable points, and, from 1924 onwards, they repeatedly defeated the Government on one occasion after another by moving resolutions demanding complete autonomy—if not independence of Great Britain—for India, and condemning the use of extraordinary legislation and ordinances directed against revolutionaries and terrorists, notably in Bengal.

These tactics met with a large measure of success. The nationalist newspapers reported at length the proceedings and speeches in the Legislative Assembly, which, being privileged, repeatedly exceeded the limits which even the ordinary law would have allowed the speakers outside the Assembly Chamber. At the centre, the new Constitution functioned with steadily increasing friction, and the tireless efforts of the local Congress organizations all over India began to crack the solid crust of rural ignorance of, and indifference to, politics. Newspaper and platform attacks on the Government and all that it stood for became more numerous and bitter, and, generally, Indians, even in the villages, began to be conscious of themselves as "political animals." In fact, the middle 1920's form a definite boundary in Indian social and political life. After those years we see an interest in, and, even, some knowledge of, purely political affairs which was almost completely lacking among the masses before then. This is the

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beginning of a development which must lead ultimately to a political life as advanced, and a political influence as effective as that enjoyed by the masses elsewhere, and it cannot be denied that this development must be set very largely to the credit of the Congress Party.

The demands of the latter were stated in a resolution moved in the Legislative Assembly by their leader, Pandit Motilal Nehru, in 1924. This demand has remained virtually unchanged since that day and has become generally known as the "National Demand." In its final shape it runs—"This Assembly recommends to the Governor-General in Council to take steps to have the Government of India Act revised with a view to establishing full responsible government in India and for the said purpose (i) to summon at an early date a representative Round Table Conference to recommend with due regard to the protection of the rights and interests of important minorities the scheme of a Constitution for India and (ii) after dissolving the Central Legislature to place the said scheme before a newly elected Indian Legislature for its approval and submit the same to the British Parliament to be embodied in a Statute."

It was carried in the Assembly by a large majority, although, significantly, it was openly opposed by some Mohammedan members. And, the very next day, the unity of the nationalist opposition to the Government was all but split by a resolution moved by a Mohammedan member seeking to increase Mohammedan representation in the Central and Provincial Legislatures and in the Government services. A personal appeal by Pandit Motilal Nehru secured the indefinite postponement of the resolution, but the members' action was another pointer to that deep-seated division in Indian society which still provides all concerned with the country's

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political future with their most intractable problem. However, the "National Demand," together with the feelings which it roused in the Assembly and in many parts of India, showed the Viceroy, Lord Reading, that opinion was sufficiently strong and united to make some positive action by the Government necessary. He therefore appointed a strong and representative committee to enquire into the changes which might be made within the four corners of the 1919 Act, in order to make its provisions more acceptable to all but the most extreme sections in the country. Still more important, it was from this time that he began to insist that the statutory overhaul of the Act might with advantage be antedated. The pace of political change and progress in India was at last speeding up.

Inevitably, with this speeding up, and with the spreading of political consciousness which has been noted above, the unity of Congress opposition to the Government and the simplicity of its policy of automatic opposition began to encounter difficulties of increasing gravity. Throughout 1924, the tide of communal antagonism rose steadily until it broke in September in the dreadful riots in Kohat in which over a hundred and fifty people were killed or wounded and vast amounts of property were looted. The whole Hindu population of Kohat evacuated the town and fierce recriminations burst between the two communities all over India. An "All Parties" Conference, including Christian representatives, was held as a result of this riot to try to find some solution of the age-old problem, but in February 1925, a sub-committee of this conference which had been charged with the task of finding some *modus vivendi* had to adjourn, indefinitely, because, as Mr. Gandhi, himself a member of the sub-committee explained, the very

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desire for a settlement was lacking. Naturally, these deplorable developments affected opinion and tempers in the Legislatures, with the result that the unity of the Congress opposition was breached and the effectiveness of its action impaired. Then, too, a movement on the right wing of Congress in favour of seizing and using the powers conferred by the 1919 Act gathered strength until, in 1926, some of the leaders definitely broke with the policy of obstruction and formulated a policy of "responsive co-operation" by which they could co-operate with the Government in any measures which were demonstrably designed to benefit the people of India. It was this movement which stopped the wrecking policy in the Provincial Legislatures, and, in the end, largely contributed to bringing about the state of affairs in India in which the British Government felt itself able to advance the statutory enquiry into the working of the 1919 Act. And, during 1925, the last remnants of the first of the post-war "direct action" movements in Indian politics disappeared with the settlement of the Sikh problems, leaving the field clear for an appraisal of the general political problem on its merits. In a word, some, at any rate, of the healthy and desirable developments contemplated by the 1919 Act had come about. The Congress Party's "walk-out" from the Central Legislature in March 1926 was, in effect, a striking illustration of this truth. They had failed to bring the work of the Legislature to a standstill and their walk-out had no important effect on its activities. Even so, they were compelled to return to their places in the following session for reasons which will be discussed.

## The Setting for the Round Table Conference

LORD READING's departure from India thus coincided with an almost complete lull in political agitation. The Non-Co-operation, Khilafat, and Sikh movements had died down, the two latter because of the substantial settlement of all the reasonable claims advanced by the Mohammedans and Sikhs respectively, the Non-Co-operation movement owing to the important cleavages in the ranks of the Congress Party itself, which have already been discussed, and, also, to the rapidly growing tension between Hindus and Mohammedans. Indeed, it was in the Hindu-Mohammedan situation that the new Viceroy, Lord Irwin, found his first serious problem in India.

This fact in itself is a good index to the change which had come over the system of Indian government since the inauguration of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms. Lord Reading, as we have seen, had to act, in effect, as leader of the Government political party in India, to conduct personal negotiations with the leaders of the opposition, to decide political problems of the highest importance and difficulty, either on his own responsibility or in consultation with the Secretary of State for India. In a word, it was during his Viceroyalty that the conception of the Viceroy's duties changed completely. Until 1921, the ideal head of the Indian Government



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was a man of first-class administrative ability and experience. After that year, it was necessary that he should be a statesman. All that happened during Lord Reading's Viceroyalty stressed the truth of this view, and by the time Lord Irwin arrived it was fully established.

The tide of Hindu-Mohammedan antagonism rose swiftly during the summer months of 1926 and it was on July 17th that Lord Irwin found himself compelled to appeal to the whole country in this connection. And in his speech he marked this new position of the Viceroy by a bold appeal for peace "In the name of Indian national life" and "In the name of Religion." Moreover, as the months of his Viceroyalty passed, Lord Irwin assumed more and more openly the position of leader of the forces in India working for constitutional progress, until, by 1929, when, as we shall see, the Round Table Conference had become a definite and immediate objective of Indian politics, the issue as between progress by constitutional reform, or by the sudden and complete revolution demanded by the Congress Party, became concentrated in a personal contest between Lord Irwin and Mr. Gandhi for the leadership of the great mass of Indian political opinion which lay between the reactionaries of the extreme right and the revolutionaries of the extreme left. In a word, by 1926 India had passed for ever out of the stage of government by a benevolent autocracy into the stage of at any rate incipient autonomy. The speed at which full autonomy could be reached depended henceforth on two factors only. The first, and far away the most important, of these was the rise of true national solidarity in place of the clash of communal interests and feelings. The second, which obviously depends very largely on the first, was the development of the institutions of democratic government and experience in their use and control.

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A completely objective survey of the events in India between the beginning of Lord Irwin's Viceroyalty and its culminating event, the Round Table Conference which opened at the end of 1930, shows that, unhappily, there was no improvement in the communal situation. In fact, there was a steady deterioration, a process which was to influence very seriously the work and results of the Round Table Conference itself. On the other hand, the growth of a vigorous political life in the country proceeded as far and as speedily as it could in the absence of that national unity without which the development of the central and all-important institution of any form of democratic government, namely, a true party system, is impossible.

The revival of political life from the coma into which it fell with the collapse of Non-Co-operation came about in curious fashion, the occasion of the revival throwing light on many of the underlying conditions and basic forces in Indian politics. The occasion was the introduction of a highly technical Government measure to stabilize the Indian standard coin—the rupee—at the gold value of one shilling and sixpence in place of the pre-war value of one shilling and fourpence. For all its technical character, such a measure as this was, of course, a matter of the greatest importance to every man and woman in the country concerned since its subject is the very pith and marrow of any national economic system. The "Rupee Stabilization Bill" was the outcome of the majority report of the Royal Commission on Indian Currency and Finance, and, in view of the strong Indian representation on the Commission, there was good reason to expect that discussion of the measure would centre in its purely technical and economic implications. This, however, did not happen, and even before the Bill was

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actually introduced into the Legislature, it had assumed a purely political and even racial character.

Broadly speaking, the increase in the gold value of the rupee as compared with its pre-war value, would benefit all consumers of imported goods whilst it would penalize those Indian industries which had to import substantial amounts of their raw materials, or had to export substantial proportions of their manufactured goods. Indian agriculture is, of course, one of the chief exporting industries of the country, and, therefore, was liable to be penalized. On the other hand, the hundreds of millions of agriculturalists stood to gain on the numerous imported goods which they consumed. At any rate, the whole issue was one for expert debate and both supporters and opponents of the proposed new rate had valid arguments at their disposal. But the industrial interests opposed to the Bill set on foot an organized campaign to defeat it, and the Congress leaders saw in this new development an excellent occasion for returning without embarrassment to the Legislature which they had left in March. They took up the opposition of the Bill, and with this action the proposed rupee ratio amazingly acquired the character of a racial issue, and it was as such that some extremist newspapers handled it throughout.

And then, another strange turn in the situation occurred. The Mohammedan political leaders decided that this was an opportunity for rallying their own forces against the predominantly Hindu Congress Party, and so they espoused the Government's cause. In the end, the Bill was carried by the narrow margin of three votes, but the battle in the Legislature had electrified every part of the country owing to the strength of the passions which had been let loose on both sides, and the lull in the political struggle was at an end.

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The alignment of forces in the rupee controversy was, in fact, a specific illustration of the general alignment of political opinion in India between 1926 and 1929. Broadly speaking, during those years, the Mohammedans entered into more and more friendly relations with the Government and their supporters in the Legislatures, while the various bodies of organized political opinion other than the Congress Party—which, of course, remained unswervingly opposed to the Government—gravitated steadily towards that Party, or at any rate, supported it in all but its more extreme proposals. It is true that these other bodies of organized political opinion were, for the most part, mainly recruited from the Hindu community, but that fact alone does not account for their general alliance with the Congress Party. As the time drew near for the review of the working of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, as laid down in the 1919 Act, even the more moderate sections of opinion in India began to demand far-reaching changes in the system of government in India, and thus caused all the minority communities, and primarily, of course, the Mohammedans, to formulate their claims and their demands for specific safeguards. The general elections to the Indian Legislature Assembly and the Provincial Councils which fell at the end of 1926 were fought out on frankly communal lines, the majority of Hindu and Mohammedan candidates basing their claims to election on the specific grounds of their championship of the interests of their own community. It was the Legislative Assembly elected at these general elections which passed the Rupee Stabilization Bill, and, later, discussed the question of Co-operation or Non-Co-operation with the Simon Commission. Hindu-Mohammedan tension both inside and outside the Central Legislature was increased by the controversy which raged round the

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Commission, and afterwards throughout the proceedings of the Round Table Conference.

No simple and all-embracing explanation of the revival and the present scope and character of Hindu-Mohammedan antagonism is possible. All sorts of factors—religious, racial, social, economic, and traditional—are inextricably bound up in it. Religious differences furnish a permanent incentive to quarrels, and religious festivals often provide the spark which causes the conflagration, but the antagonism between the two communities is very far from being limited by religion. It now has strong economic ingredients and its objectives are definitely political, and, in a province like the Punjab, even racial.

The history of Hindu-Mohammedan tension since the war of 1914-18 has shown on the Mohammedan side an increasing determination to achieve a political position in which Mohammedan interests should not be subject to the control of a majority vote in a democratically elected Legislature, since, in all but two of the major provinces of India, Mohammedans must be in a permanent minority. The latest development of this determination, as we shall see, is that India shall be divided into two nations, a Hindu nation and a Mohammedan nation, an ideal whose realization would mean the negation of Indian national unity, and the abandonment, at any rate for a very long time, of all hopes of a strong, self-governing India. It cannot be doubted that the whole trend of Hindu-Mohammedan relations since 1921 represents a most formidable political problem, which awaits solution by Hindus and Mohammedans themselves.

But it must not for a moment be assumed that the problem is insoluble. The past history of India made inevitable some such phase as this in Hindu-Mohammedan relations. When the British conquered India from the

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middle of the eighteenth century onwards, they conquered it from the Mogul emperors who were still the titular rulers of the country in spite of the inroads made on their domains by the Mahratta and other powers. Over the whole of the Mogul Empire Mohammedans held positions of power and profit as satraps and officials of all kinds and degrees before the coming of the British, and they have never forgotten that they preceded the British as rulers. So, now that the process of creating an indigenous government of India has begun, and is gathering momentum year by year, Mohammedans look to their past history, and old problems and conditions which had been, so to speak, frozen under the strong rule of the British are coming to life again and demanding attention. How to solve these problems and how to transform these conditions in the light of present-day needs is the task which lies before the leaders of the two communities, helped, as far as possible, by British experience and statesmanship.

Lord Irwin had not been very long in India before he discovered, as Lord Reading had done, at the end of his Viceroyalty, that the time was ripe for another review of the Government of India Act. In the provinces, dyarchy had played the part allotted to it, by giving responsible Ministers experience of the handling of administrative power. But events had shown that it could not lead to the rise of real political parties, nor could it, from its very nature, give birth at any time to the autonomous and collectively responsible Provincial Government such as is found in other British Dominions, and was the ideal of Indian politicians of all shades of opinion. At the centre, too, the Reforms showed no very obvious possibilities of further useful developments. The Congress opposition had definitely rejected all propo-

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sals that they should work the Reforms as a constitutional opposition, and, indeed, from the moment they entered the new legislative bodies at the 1923 elections, the Constitution functioned with ever-increasing difficulty against their practically automatic obstruction. From time to time, splits took place in the Congress Party as one section or another decided to work the Reforms, but the main official body of Congress never changed policy and were able to increase the drag and friction on the governmental machine as the years went by. The provisions of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, so far as the Central Government was concerned, were such as to perpetuate and increase these difficulties. The complete lack of responsibility of the Government of India to the Legislature, coupled with the latter's elected and non-official majority and the wide powers of question, resolution-moving and so on possessed by its members, all marked out this side of the Reforms as purely temporary. It was expected that the provinces would provide the seed-bed and nursery of democratic institutions in India and that these would, in due course, be transplanted to the centre. But, as we have seen, the possibilities of growth in the provinces were strictly limited, and the politicians at the centre were not willing to wait.

From the beginning of his Viceroyalty, one of the major aims of Lord Irwin's policy was to get the Congress Party back into the Constitution so to speak, to persuade them to abandon their attitude of sterile non-co-operation and work constitutionally for the attainment of their objectives. It was clear, however, that nothing but a major political move could accomplish this aim, and that nothing less than a revision of the whole system of government in India would constitute the necessary move. There was no possibility of the extreme claims made

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by the Congress Party in the "Independence Resolution" of 1924 being met, since that would have involved a complete surrender to the Congress, and of correspondingly violent reaction from non-Congress and anti-Congress elements in the country. But, through careful sounding of representatives of all sections of political thought in India, Lord Irwin assured himself that an offer to ante-date the statutory enquiry into the working of the 1919 Act would be widely welcomed, even by many members of the Congress Party itself.

The attitude of the British Government towards demands for an immediate revision of the system of government in India had always been the same, namely, that as long as the strongest and best-organized section of Indian political opinion persisted in the policy of continuous and automatic non-co-operation, the conditions necessary for the objective examination of a highly complicated problem were lacking. But, by the middle of 1927, Lord Irwin was able to persuade the India Office that there had lately been signs "that while those who have been foremost in advancing the claims of India to full self-government have in no way abandoned principles, they have felt it their duty to assert" there was nevertheless "a greater disposition to deal with the actual facts of the situation." Another aspect of the Indian situation which strongly influenced Lord Irwin in this matter was that of communal relations. He always thought that the very uncertainty over the form which future constitutional changes might take, was a powerful contributory force in communal antagonism since, as he himself explained to the people of India, "each side may have been, consciously or unconsciously, actuated by the desire to strengthen, as they supposed, their relative position in anticipation of the Statutory Com-



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mission." However this might be, it was clear by the middle of 1927 that on all grounds of broad constitutional considerations and current political conditions, nothing but harm could result from any further delay in undertaking the enquiry into the working of the system of government in India provided for in the 1919 Act, and accordingly, in November 1927, His Majesty's Government announced the appointment of the Indian Statutory Commission, better known as the Simon Commission from its chairman, Sir John Simon.

From the Indian point of view, however, there was one fatal flaw in the composition of the Commission, namely, that no Indian was included among its members. Lord Birkenhead, who was then Secretary of State for India, gave at full length the British Government's reason for appointing a purely British Commission, but the reason which weighed most heavily in the final decision was that it was impossible to find any Indian members who had not already committed themselves to definite views from which they would not and could not depart. But, of course, it was impossible for the great majority of Indians to look at the matter from this point of view. Their argument was that the Commission's task would be to settle the political future of India and the Indian people, and that to exclude representatives of the latter from the investigating body was not only an affront to Indian self-respect, but was even *prima facie* evidence of a fundamental dishonesty of purpose. The fact that the British Labour Party, which had always been friendly to Indian aspirations, associated themselves fully with the Commission and allowed two of their leading members to accept nomination to the Commission did not lay these suspicions to rest. Neither did the equally important fact in this connection, that careful arrangements had

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been made for the association of Indian opinion with the Commission at all stages of its work. In the first place, the British Government believed that the Commission's work would be greatly facilitated if it were to invite the two houses of the Indian Central Legislature to appoint a Joint Select Committee from among their unofficial members to lay its views before the Commission. This proposed Committee might, further, remain in being for any consultation which the Commission might desire at any subsequent stage. It was suggested also that a similar procedure should be adopted with the Provincial Legislatures. Even after the Commission had presented its report to Parliament, the association of Indians with its work was not to end, for it was intended that when the British Government's proposal on the report reached the Joint Select Committee stage, the view of the Indian Legislature should be ascertained from delegations which would be invited to attend in London. It would also be open to the Joint Select Committee to obtain the views of any other bodies in India whom it wanted to consult.

These arrangements were explained to India by Lord Irwin in a public announcement on November 8th, 1927, but they had no power to check the almost unanimous expression of disapproval, and even resentment, which arose in Indian political circles. At once the proposal was made to boycott the Commission, and this was taken up with enthusiasm by most sections of organized opinion in the country except the majority of Mohammedans, whose determination to co-operate with the Commission strengthened as the movement for boycott grew, by some sections of the old Indian Liberal Party, and by the strong Justice Party in the south of India.

It was only natural that the supporters of the boycott,

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drawn as they were from a number of separate and even rival political parties and groups, should try to settle their hitherto existing differences in order to present a united opposition to the Government of India and the Statutory Commission. Therefore, the Congress and Nationalist Parties, the Independent Party led by Mr. Jinnah, which included a number of Mohammedans and many of the Liberal Party, held an "All-Party" Conference in Delhi in March 1928 to try to settle the most important differences between Hindus and Mohammedans, preparatory to making a powerful *démarche* to the Government. These differences were: first, the retention or abolition of the system of communal electorates; secondly, the extension of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms to the North-West Frontier Province which had an overwhelming Mohammedan majority and had hitherto been excluded from the Reforms; and thirdly, the separation of Sind from the Bombay Presidency and its elevation to the status of a province—also with an overwhelming Mohammedan majority. But Mohammedans were not ready to give up their system of communal electorates and the Hindu spokesmen would not consider the extension of reforms to the Frontier Province or the separation of Mohammedan Sind from predominantly Hindu Bombay. The Conference, therefore, came to nothing. But the determination of the sections represented at the Conference to boycott the Simon Commission remained as strong as ever.

Sir John Simon and his colleagues visited India twice for the purposes of their enquiry. They landed in Bombay on their first visit on February 3, 1928, to find that the annual Christmas and New Year conferences of the leading political associations, namely, the All-India Muslim League and the Indian Liberal Federation,

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had not altered the boycott position in any important particular. Sir John Simon, naturally, was anxious to meet all reasonable Indian demands and was prepared to go to the farthest possible limit to convince the Indian political leaders that they could co-operate with him without derogating from either their political principles or their own self-respect. Accordingly, on February 6th, he wrote a letter to Lord Irwin proposing that the Statutory Commission and the Committee to be chosen by the Indian Central Legislature should together form a "Joint Free Conference" which should receive all evidence, whether oral or written. In the same way, each Provincial Legislature was to be asked to nominate a provincial committee to sit with the Statutory Commission as the Indian wing of the Joint Free Conference, whenever the Conference was considering provincial subjects in a particular province. This offer did not, however, have any noticeable effect on the attitude of the All-India politicians who were boycotting the Commission, but it helped to influence opinion in the provinces, and, in the event, every Provincial Legislature except one—that of the Central Provinces—decided to nominate a committee to co-operate with the Simon Commission.

But the All-India party leaders refused to modify the boycott in any particular, and, indeed, set up a rival Commission of their own to produce a report on Indian Constitutional Reforms. Actually this report, which was issued in 1928, was the work mainly of two men, Pandit Motilal Nehru, the leader of the Congress Party, and Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, one of the most distinguished of the Indian Liberals. In essence, the Nehru Report, as this document came to be called, was a rather naïve attempt to compromise between the rival Hindu and Mohammedan claims discussed by the All-Parties Con-

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ference. The Nehru Report recommended the extension of existing and future reforms to the North-West Frontier Province, on exactly the same terms as any other province and also supported the promotion of Sind to the provincial status. As a sop to the Hindus, the report recommended the abolition of communal electorates. The result of this report was merely to accentuate Hindu-Mohammedan differences since neither side would accept it, and by the end of 1928 communal antagonism and the fragmentation of political opinion had reached a point at which it became necessary for the Governments of Great Britain and India seriously to consider the situation and devise measures for its improvement.

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THE measures to be taken were never really in doubt. It is true that both in England and in India influential sections of thought called for strong disciplinary action against the left-wing leaders in Congress and out of it, and many wished to seize the opportunity actually to set back the political clock by returning to a simpler and more autocratic form of government for India. But such views as these were doomed to disappointment from the start, because Lord Irwin knew that the conditions of the day called for advance rather than retreat, and, also, because in Mr. Wedgwood Benn, who became Secretary of State for India in 1929, he found a man who not only shared his views but had all the necessary force and courage to put them into practice. Accordingly, in June 1929, Lord Irwin came to England on leave to make known his suggestions for the restoration of the situation in India, and to discuss them with the leaders of the various political parties. Briefly, the gist of his proposals was that representatives of all sections of Indian opinion, including the Princes, should be invited to meet His Majesty's Government to discuss the political future of India. The proposal was, of course, one to be looked at very carefully in view of the fact that the Simon Commission had not yet reported, and that, unless Sir John Simon and his colleagues agreed, the development contemplated by Lord Irwin might easily render their work

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null and void. Mr. Benn, strongly impressed by his own knowledge of the state of affairs in India, accepted Lord Irwin's argument that the proposed development was, in fact, the only thing that could ensure any sort of a hearing in India for the Simon Commission's Report when it appeared. The important boycotting elements had already prejudged it and it had simply no chance of making any impression on them. And yet it had been shown that Indians themselves could produce no acceptable alternative. The dilemma was complete. The members of the Statutory Commission obviously accepted the view that some new move of the first importance was necessary to restore the position in India for on October 16, 1929, Sir John Simon wrote a letter to Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, who was then Prime Minister, asking on behalf of his colleagues as well as himself whether the British Government would allow the members of the Statutory Commission to interpret their terms of reference in such a way as would enable them to examine the methods by which the future relations between British India and the Indian States might be adjusted. If the Government agreed to this, then some sort of Conference might be arranged at which representatives both of the Indian States and of British India might attend to meet His Majesty's Government for the purpose of reaching the greatest possible measure of agreement on the Commission's proposals.

These proposals were welcomed by the British and Indian Governments and Lord Irwin returned to India to put them before the political leaders and people of the country. They duly appeared in a statement issued on October 31, 1929. The immediate reaction was encouraging. The day after the publication of the statement two meetings of political leaders of all sections of opinion

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were called, one at Bombay and one at Delhi, and were attended by strong and influential representatives, in spite of the extreme shortness of the notice. At Bombay, the meeting was all but unanimous in welcoming the Viceroy's offer, but at Delhi, where most of the more extreme Congressmen were assembled, the result was different. The Congressmen wanted to make conditions which neither His Majesty's Government nor certain powerful Indian interests were likely to accept, but the influence of the non-Congressmen who were present at the meeting was sufficient to prevent the extremists from carrying the day. In the end, a carefully worded statement was issued by those present at the Delhi meeting to the effect that they hoped to tender their co-operation, but that "certain acts should be done and certain points should be cleared to inspire trust and ensure the co-operation of the principal political organizations of the country." The acts and points referred to were left vague and for some time it was widely believed that even the more extreme Congressmen would hesitate to reject the Viceroy's offer. By the end of November, every political party and politician of standing in India, with the sole exception of the Congress Party, had openly declared their support of Lord Irwin's statement. But, as the year drew to its close, it became increasingly clear that the Congress Party would not align itself with the others, and when Mr. Gandhi and Pandit Motilal Nehru, the Party leader, insisted that Congress would take part in the proposed Conference only if its functions were specifically confined to working out a form of government for India on the lines of full and immediate Dominion Status, the question of Congress participation was settled for the time being. The 1929 Session of the All-India National Congress made this quite clear, and, furthermore,



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carried a resolution demanding the "independence" of India.

This resolution, however, led to another of those breaches in Congress unity which have marked its progress at every important turning point in Indian history since 1908. The right wing of the Congress Party was seriously alarmed, whilst even the leaders of the Party were shaken by the fate of another resolution which was put to the Congress at this session. An attempt had been made to derail the Viceroy's train on December 23rd just before the opening of the session, and Mr. Gandhi moved a resolution condemning the outrage. In spite of his influence and that of the other Congress leaders who supported him, the resolution had to be modified in tone and even then was carried only by a narrow majority.

There were others in India, besides the right wing of Congress, who viewed the results of the latter's session with apprehension, and their feelings were expressed by the spokesmen of the All-India Liberal Federation which met at the same time as Congress. The Liberals were whole-hearted in their acceptance of Lord Irwin's offer, and their leaders performed a useful service by explaining that the Viceroy's statement of October 31st represented the policy not only of the Labour Government in power in England, but also of the official leaders of the Conservative and Liberal Parties. The explanation was necessary, because debates on Lord Irwin's statement, which had taken place in both Houses of Parliament, had, naturally, evoked much hostile criticism of the proposed Round Table Conference, and, just as naturally, it was the more pungent of this criticism which had been given the widest publicity in India. However, by the

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beginning of 1930, the political alignment was complete. As far as the Round Table Conference was concerned, it was the Congress Party against the rest, and there were important individuals and sections inside that Party who would rather have supported Lord Irwin than their own leaders. In fact, in the absence of any major disturbing influences, there were prospects of a general agreement by all parties, including at least the greater part of the Congress Party, to co-operate with the Government in this latest attempt to find the basis of a permanent political settlement.

Unfortunately, the major disturbing influence was to show itself in 1930 in the shape of a revival of the Non-Co-operation movement by Mr. Gandhi in person. The general situation had definitely grown worse during 1929. The protracted course of the Public Safety Bill in the Legislative Assembly—a measure introduced in 1928 to give the Government power to deal with certain kinds of revolutionary agitators—had given rise to strong partisan feelings on all sides of the House, from which they had spread throughout the country, feelings which were largely responsible for the bomb outrage in the Assembly chamber at the end of the Delhi session of 1929. The various youth movements on the extreme left of Indian politics provided ample and willing material for a revival of terrorist activities, and, inevitably, political extremism was matched by communal extremism. Actual rioting between the two communities was not so frequent in these days as it had been, but the political differences between them grew increasingly acute and their scope widened continually. Already by 1930 it was quite clear that no agreement was likely to be reached by any Conference of the two sides on such crucial matters as communal

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representation, the creation of new provinces with Mohammedan majorities, as in the case of Sind, and the promotion of the North-West Frontier Province to the status of a full province with all the ordinary legislative and administrative apparatus of a "Governor's Province." Any attempts to bring about a settlement of these and other outstanding problems could be no more than merely formal, and, as a matter of fact, no notable attempt was made after the fiasco of the All-Parties Conference, until Mr. Gandhi and the Aga Khan tried to come to an agreement during the second session of the Round Table Conference, when the work of the whole Conference was being held up by the irreconcilable clash of opinion and interests between the representatives of the two communities.

Meanwhile, the work of the Conference went on in London. The summoning of the Round Table Conference was the outcome of the strength and tenacity of Indian nationalists and the flexibility of British policy and institutions. The composition of the Conference was a living illustration of the great diversity of interests of all sorts, both Indian and British, which would have to be satisfied by any Indian Constitution which was to be more than an academic exercise, and was a reflection of the immense complexity of the problems to be solved. And, lastly, the proceedings of the Conference were to show how deep-seated were the differences thus represented by its personnel. Nevertheless, November 12, 1930, when the Round Table Conference met for the first time to be inaugurated by King George V, was the most important date so far recorded in the history of British India, for it was an open and irrevocable declaration that henceforth the political future of India was no longer to

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be decided by the British Parliament alone, and that India must have a free and equal voice in its decision. It is true that the Statute embodying the Indian Constitution is an Act of the Imperial Parliament, and can be changed only by Parliament, but that is true also of the Canadian Constitution. There are practical reasons for the arrangement. In a word, the summoning of the Round Table Conference wiped out for ever the old tutelage of India.

We have seen that the Conference did not open under anything like ideal auspices. The new wave of agitation that was sweeping over India, the absence of any representation of the Congress Party, the rising Hindu-Mohammedan enmity and the strengthening opposition, in certain quarters in Great Britain, to any important changes in the system of government in India, all combined to make the prospects unpromising and the outcome dubious. Important economic interests in Great Britain—on the side of Labour as well as Capital—viewed with deep suspicion any political changes which might lead to possible discrimination against British trade in India, and even in some circles favourable to Indian political aspirations there was growing disapproval of the excesses of civil disobedience in India. On the other hand, as news of the disturbances and the mass arrests in India came through to the delegates in London, many of them showed signs of allowing their natural feelings of resentment to influence their conduct at the Conference. In fact, when the delegates assembled in St. James's Palace for their first plenary session, there were few outside observers who would not have predicted a head-on collision between the British Government and a very strong section of the Indian representatives. In all probability this collision would have occurred but for an

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important development which had been proceeding quietly in India for some months, unknown to the general public and the casual observer. This development took the form of consultation and rapprochement between some of the Princes and the leaders of the Indian Liberals and Responsive Co-operators, leading in the end to an agreement on the broad principle of a federation, for certain specified purposes, between the Indian States and British India. It will be seen, therefore, that opinion in those quarters in India where faith was still placed in constitutional, as opposed to revolutionary, agitation had been moving on parallel lines to that of the members of the Statutory Commission, of Lord Irwin, and of many others who saw in the close union of the two Indias—"Indian" India and British India—a possible way of advance which circumstances denied, for the present at any rate, to British India alone. The Maharajah of Bikanir's statement at the first plenary session of the Conference on November 17, 1930, that the Indian States could best make their contribution "to the greater contentment and prosperity of India as a whole . . . through a federal system of government composed of the States and British India," thus amounted to a political sensation of some magnitude, especially since it was joined to a declaration that the States would never federate with a government of British India which was responsible to the British Parliament. What the Maharajah, in fact, declared for was federation with a responsibly self-governing British India whose government should be subject only to such restrictions or safeguards as were necessary during a period of transition from one form and status of government to another. Every speaker who followed expressed his preference for the federal as opposed to the unitary

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system of government for India, and practically every one of them admitted that with this new principle there had come new possibilities of wider and speedier solutions for some of the most difficult of all the problems arising out of the relations between India and Great Britain and between the different parts and interests of India herself.

But, of course, this alluring vision of an All-India Federation had to be translated into reality, and in turning their hands to this task, the Conference started out on a road whose end has not yet been reached.

When the Conference concluded its first session on January 19, 1931, its nine sub-committees on the Federal Structure, the Provincial Constitution, Minorities, Burma, The North-West Frontier Province, Franchise, Defence, The Services, and Sind, had done an immense amount of valuable spade-work and had reached agreement on a number of points of detail. But in two particulars, and these were literally fundamental particulars, nothing had been accomplished. The first of these related to the principles and conditions in which the All-India Federation would be based. They were left in the air, and the proposed Federation was still left as the mere project of a Federation. The second of these two fundamentals, on which, indeed, the first largely depended, was the communal and minority question. So far from the Conference's having advanced nearer to a solution of the formidable problems presented by the minorities, these problems had grown apparently even more intractable, so much so, that in the report of the sub-committee on Federal Structure we read that the leading Mohammedan spokesmen could not consent finally to frame any Constitution unless the Hindu-Muslim question was settled. And it

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was not only the Hindu-Muslim side of the communal and minority problem which had grown more acute. The untouchables had found able leaders and had advanced their claims in a determined fashion, whilst the Sikhs in the Punjab laid down certain demands to which they adhered with traditional stubbornness.

Of the constructive work achieved at the first session of the Conference, the most important was the general agreement on the principle of fully representative government in the Governors' provinces, subject to the retention by the Governors of certain powers which most of the delegates admitted to be necessary at the present stage. A wide measure of agreement was reached on the vexed questions of the North-West Frontier Province and Sind, on measures for speeding up the "Indianization" of the Indian Army and for the future of the great Civil Services in India, and a statement was made of the specific problems to be settled by a Franchise Committee which the Conference agreed should be set up. Moreover, in his speech adjourning the session on January 19, 1934, the Prime Minister, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, laid down clearly the British policy towards India, a policy which has been repeatedly re-affirmed by his successors. "The attitude of the British Government," he said, ". . . is nothing more than an overwhelming desire to leave you to settle your own affairs. . . . Our one ambition is that, being in a sense kith and kindred with you (since history, whether you liked it or whether we liked it, has woven our destinies somehow together), we may use that unity with you in order to pave your way and smooth your path to that much-required internal unity amongst yourselves." On the very important matter of safeguards, Mr. MacDonald told the delegates that this fell into three classes. The first

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being constitutional safeguards such as an Indian Constituent Assembly itself would have to write into its own Constitution. The second, such as those connected with the Services and Finance, was necessary as much for foreign confidence in India as on account of conditions in the country at the present time, whilst the third class, those relating to the minority communities, could be abrogated at any time by Indians themselves. Finally, in set terms, Mr. MacDonald announced that "with a Legislature constituted on a federal basis, His Majesty's Government will be prepared to recognize the principle of the responsibility of the Executive to the Legislature."

On their return to India, the delegates found that the general political outlook seemed more promising than for some months past, since Lord Irwin and Mr. Gandhi were about to discuss personally the conditions on which the Civil Disobedience movement could be ended and the Congress Party be drawn into participation in the constitutional movement for political progress embodied in the Round Table Conference. They came to an agreement at the beginning of March—the so-called "Irwin-Gandhi Pact"—according to which Civil Disobedience, the boycott of British goods, and all forms of picketing except those allowed by law would end and Congress would be represented at the Round Table Conference. It was further agreed that the large numbers of persons arrested for complicity in the disturbances attendant on Civil Disobedience would be released except those guilty of violent offences. It was agreed also that public servants who had been dismissed from their posts on account of their attitude towards Civil Disobedience should be restored. For a time, this pact served the purpose of



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restoring order and tranquillity out of the widespread disorder and lawlessness of the preceding months, but this state of affairs was short-lived. There were elements in the Indian internal situation which were not amenable to any such agreements as this. Terrorism was rife in Bengal where political murders and attempted murders were taking place. Even in the Punjab an attempt was made to murder the Governor, Sir Geoffrey de Montmorency, and elsewhere in India Congress agents were using agrarian distress to foment unrest among the peasantry and tenants. It was inevitable that the less responsible members of the Congress Party should claim the pact as a victory for themselves, and it was not very long before provincial governments had to take action once more against disturbers of the peace. This led to charges of breach of the pact by the provincial governments and so the situation began once more to deteriorate. Nevertheless, during the brief lull of the pact, the All-India National Congress ratified the pact unanimously and Mr. Gandhi decided to represent the Congress at the second session of the Round Table Conference which opened in September 1931.

But, whilst this uneasy equilibrium had been reached between the Government and Congress, Hindu-Mohammedan relations became definitely worse. The deep breach which had been revealed by the proceedings of the Federal Structure Sub-Committee of the Round Table Conference had given added strength to Mohammedan demands for safeguards, and the Irwin-Gandhi pact filled them with suspicions that the predominantly Hindu Congress had been put in a specially privileged position. Within three weeks of the conclusion of the pact, fierce Hindu-Mohammedan rioting broke out at Cawnpore, and when, in April, Mr. Gandhi announced that while

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Congress would willingly concede Mohammedan demands, those demands must be made by Mohammedans as a whole, the strain became increasingly acute. For, to Mohammedans, this announcement appeared as an attempt to force Mohammedans to concede the crucial principle of joint, as opposed to communal, electorates, by insisting on giving the small minority of Mohammedan Congressmen the same weight and importance as the overwhelming majority of their co-religionists who had refused to compromise on this subject of joint electorates. It is from this time that Mohammedan opinion began to turn with increasing momentum against the whole conception of democratic government based on majority rule, since they knew that they would always be outnumbered by the Hindus, and they feared that they would be consistently outvoted. Since 1931, this rejection of responsible self-government for India based on majority control has grown, as we shall see, into a cardinal rule of Mohammedan policy. Another complication in Hindu-Mohammedan relations came from a conference of Punjab and Frontier Hindus held in May at which full expression was given to the fears of those Hindus whose homes were in these two provinces of predominantly Mohammedan population. The Sikhs, too, became more urgent in their claims for both protective safeguards and for specific recognition of the importance of their community in the Punjab, an importance which, they claimed, was out of all proportion to their numbers.

Nevertheless, the second session of the Round Table Conference opened, as arranged, in London in September. It was a disappointing affair for everything was forced to wait on attempts to arrange a settlement of the minorities problem by agreement. The most important aspect of the problem was, of course, that of Hindu and Mohammedan

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relations, but the Sikhs forced their claims into the forefront of the discussion and the depressed classes showed more initiative and determination than ever before. Mr. Gandhi and the Aga Khan played the leading parts in the continuous negotiations which went on, but as the second session drew to its close, they were forced to admit that there was no chance of a settlement by agreement, and the whole session was, therefore, a complete failure so far as its main object was concerned, namely, to settle the structure of the All-India Federation, and to enable the Indian States to settle among themselves their place in the Federation and their mutual relations inside it. In adjourning the second session, Mr. MacDonald announced that unless Indians themselves could present a settlement acceptable to all parties, then His Majesty's Government would have to apply a provisional scheme drawn up in London.

In the end, this had to be done. The third session of the Round Table Conference which was held from November 17th to December 24, 1932, was concerned mostly with such highly technical problems as the form of the Indian States Instruments of Accession to the Federation, administrative relations between the Federal Centre and the Units, and other such matters. The broader problems and issues of Indian politics did not come before the greatly reduced number of delegates. It was in 1932 that the British Government announced its "communal decision." No attempt was made in it to settle all the small points in dispute between the various communities, but it was not confined only to the dispute between Hindus and Mohammedans. It dealt entirely with the representation of the various communities and interests in the Provincial Legislatures—with the exception of Burma—and it made clear the fact that its terms could be at any

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time replaced by those of an agreed settlement made by the different communities themselves. Broadly speaking, the communal decision laid down that in all the provinces except Bengal, the Punjab and the North-West Frontier Province, Hindus were in the majority and therefore Mohammedan representation in the Provincial Legislatures should be suitably weighted. In the three provinces named above, the Mohammedan ratio of representation was to be scaled down somewhat so as to make the discrepancy between them and the Hindus less formidable.

Inevitably, the decision did not satisfy any of the parties, neither Hindus, Mohammedans, Sikhs, or Depressed Classes. The Mohammedans were the least dissatisfied, but the Depressed Classes got the decision modified in their favour by a curious development. They had been given 71 seats to be decided in separate communal electorates and Mr. Gandhi threatened to fast to death unless this separate representation, which he regarded as violent separation of the Depressed Classes from the Hindu fold, was abolished. After much discussion with Hindu leaders, the Depressed Classes agreed to accept 148 in lieu of the original 71, these 148 to be decided by joint Hindu-Depressed Classes electorates subject to a system of primary election in which voters of the Depressed Classes formed an electoral college to choose a panel of candidates.

The Round Table Conference had thus given birth to the project of a Federation of All-India and it had done much excellent work in hammering out and getting agreement on a host of technical and not unduly controversial parts of the Federal structure. But the crucial problems of the terms on which the Indian States were to enter the Federation, and acceptable safeguards for

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minority interests were still unresolved. It was left to the British Government to do its best in these regards when it came to draw up its plan of political progress for India based on the work of the Round Table Conference.

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ONE of the most striking and significant features of all three sessions of the Round Table Conference was the fact that some of the most dangerous conflicts of interest arose not between the representatives of Great Britain and India, but between the different interests and communities represented by the Indian delegates themselves. We have seen how, for example, the communal question prevented the Conference from working out the structure of the Federation. Similarly, there were numerous and important clashes between the representatives of British India and of the Indian States, and in all these sharp disagreements it was the British Government which sought to play the rôle of arbiter. This has been the rôle of the British Government throughout the succeeding years, and it is against the background of this broad consideration that we look at the developments of 1932 to 1940 in India. The existence of these formidable differences between the various communities and interests of India is, of course, no reproach to the peoples of India. They are due to historic causes and accidents. The Mogul Empire in India, of which the British are the heirs and successors, was as artificial and, in its decay, as ramshackle a thing as the Holy Roman Empire towards the end of the eighteenth century and, had it simply fallen to pieces in the hands of the feeble successors of Aurangzeb,

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there is not the slightest doubt that India would have become the scene of internecine warfare as prolonged, as desperate, and as ruinous as the wars which tore Europe between the opening of the Thirty Years War and Waterloo. In the middle of the eighteenth century, when the British began to acquire their rule over the country, the internal destruction of India was well under way in the Carnatic, the Deccan, and the North and East. But two centuries of strong centralized rule by the British have done as much as any external influence can possibly do to make one nation out of a number of heterogeneous and even warring peoples. There is, in fact, good reason to hope that India may never have to pass through the fearful ordeal of civil war, since it is to the interest of all concerned to retain the Pax Britannica until the interests and ideals of all the peoples of India have become sufficiently homogeneous to enable essential changes and adjustments to be made peacefully, thus rendering the actual control of the government to the country by the British no longer necessary. This is the reason why, during the last three decades, every outbreak of extremism or violence in India has invariably led, sooner or later, to a split even in the ranks of the extremists themselves. This is the reason also why every invitation to Indian political leaders to take and exercise more power has produced a favourable response even from among the ranks of the left wing itself. No better illustration of the truth of this can be given than the action of practically every one of the leading Nationalist politicians in condemning the "independence" resolution submitted to the All-India National Congress at Lahore in 1929 and trying to get it withdrawn or defeated.

Thus, it was only to be expected that as Dominion Status—or to use a simpler and more generally understood

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expression—home rule—for India approached ever more closely, ancient and deeply rooted differences between the various communities, and, even, regions, of the country should rouse themselves into activity again, often in new and very threatening forms. This renewed activity is an inevitable part of India's political metabolism, a form of growing pains, but it is as well that all students of Indian affairs should understand clearly its character and scope, so that they might understand the importance and danger—and, also, the potential creative opportunities—of what is happening in Indian politics now. For the 1935 Government of India Act which was the outcome of the Round Table Conference, has brought the peoples of India face to face with the necessity of themselves taking certain steps essential to the formation of an Indian nation, of which the Federation would be the visible political embodiment, steps which nobody else could take for them.

The point has been reached at which the primary function of the British Government is to guarantee the Pax Britannica within which Indians of all creeds and races, and of all parts and provinces, may peacefully work out their own destiny. Such, then, is the situation created by the 1935 Act.

The provisions of the Act mirror the proceedings of the Round Table Conference and thus faithfully reflect the considerations discussed above.<sup>1</sup> In the first place it was compelled to continue, for the time being at any rate, the partition of India into the two major divisions of British India and the Indian States. And, secondly, all the provisions for minority safeguards were the work of the British Government. They were not the embodiment of a free and binding agreement among the various communities and interests concerned. The views of His



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Majesty's Government and their proposals for the new Constitution of India were first published in a White Paper in March 1933. These proposals followed closely the discussions and decisions of the Round Table Conference and contained no novelties. It was clear, too, that the new Government of India Act, when it came to be drafted, would not depart materially either from the decisions of the Round Table Conference or the White Paper. Nor did it.

The White Paper and the Act approached the All-India Federation in two stages. The first stage, to be completed as soon as possible, consisted in the setting up of autonomous governments in all the provinces of British India, including two newly created provinces, namely, Sind, which was cut out of the Bombay Presidency, and Orissa, detached from the former province of Bihar and Orissa. The second stage would be the federation of these eleven British provinces with the Indian States after agreement had been reached between the Princes and the suzerain power concerning the terms on which the Princes would come into the Federation. A series of safeguards marked each stage of the progress. In the first stage, the creation of autonomous provinces, the Governor of the province was vested with extraordinary powers to overrule the Provincial Cabinet in certain circumstances. These circumstances would arise, for example, whenever the Governor should deem it necessary to act against the advice of his Cabinet in matters affecting the peace and security of the province, or to protect the interests of a minority. At the centre, when the Federation should come into existence, the Viceroy was to have special powers and responsibilities with regard to preventing grave menace to the peace of India, defence, foreign policy, the safeguarding of financial stability, and the safe-

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guarding of the interests of minorities. Until the All-India Federation came into existence, the Central Government and Legislature of the country were to remain as they were, that is, the Government of India was to remain non-responsible to the Legislature, and the latter was to have no more than the powers of criticism and interpellation which it already possessed. Thus, whilst the provinces would be governed by all but fully responsible governments, the Central Government was to remain static during the interval—however long it might be—that must elapse between the coming into operation of the first and the second stages of the 1935 Act.

It will be seen that the scope of the measure fell short of Dominion Status for India as that term has been understood since the Statute of Westminster. This was the status which practically every Indian delegate claimed at the Round Table Conference, and although Mr. Gandhi, representing the All-India National Congress, spoke of "independence," it was certain that many, even of his Congress colleagues, had Dominion Status as their immediate goal. But not only was the setting up of a federal government, limited as it was by the 1935 Act, postponed to some future date which, it was hoped, would be soon, but was, in fact, indefinite, but even provincial autonomy was limited by safeguards. It is true that these safeguards were not part of the normal working of the Constitution, and were for use only in emergencies which need never arise. Nevertheless, they were seen as encroachments on the freedom of action of the provincial Cabinets, and, even, in some quarters, as proofs that even now Indians were not to be trusted to handle their own affairs.

Undoubtedly, the publication of the scheme of reforms caused disappointment in most quarters in India, but except by certain elements on the extreme left of Indian

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politics, this disappointment was not expressed with violence or anger. On the contrary, the debates in both the Central and Provincial Legislatures, though severely critical, kept well within constitutional limits and actually offered many constructive suggestions. The safeguards were the principal target of attack, and the retention of control over the Indian Civil and Police Services by the Secretary of State and the slowness of the Indianization of the Army came in for special criticism also. In fact, none of the Legislatures wished to reject the scheme as a whole. Outside the Legislature, however, expression of opinion was, naturally, less restrained and responsible. Congress spokesmen wanted to reject the whole scheme of reform, and even the Liberals in their annual session at Calcutta on April 17th denounced the safeguards as not in India's interests and as a denial of constitutional government.

The Joint Select Committee and the Government of India Bill provided yet one more opportunity for the advocacy of claims by the various communities and interests in India and Great Britain. Full advantage was taken of this opportunity by all concerned and the proceedings of the Committee were particularly long and detailed. It was not to be expected, however, that any major changes would be made in the provisions of the Bill, and its main structure emerged from the Committee in the shape in which it was entered. But His Majesty's Government, at all stages, continued its efforts to bring about agreement between communal and sectional interests and in particular to clarify its attitude towards the widespread Indian demand that the new Constitution should give India Dominion Status. For reasons already detailed, all of them referring to internal conditions in India, it was not found possible to meet this demand imme-

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diately and completely, but it was decided to state unequivocally that the goal of India's political progress was Dominion Status. The Joint Select Committee enquiry provided yet one more, and possibly the last, occasion for a big clash between the basic ideals of Indian Nationalists and other opponents in India and in this country, and the fight was continued in Parliament and in India right up to the passing of the Act and the royal assent to it on August 2, 1935.

Thereafter, broadly speaking, the struggle between the British and Indian Governments on the one hand and the more extreme exponents of Indian Nationalist opinion on the other may be said to have fallen into abeyance until the bringing into force of the Government of India Act in 1937. The new wave of civil disturbance which flared up after Mr. Gandhi's return from the Round Table Conference and his arrest had spent its force by the end of 1934, and on the main political front there was quiet in India. But behind the main political battlefield, so to speak, the dispositions of the various contending parties steadily began to assume sharper and clearer outlines and fell into the patterns which lasted until the outbreak of the war in September 1939.

Thus all those who stood for political progress by constitutional methods—an indeterminate and not very aggressive body, but, nevertheless, one which is very strong numerically, a body partly represented by the Indian Liberal Federation—realized and proclaimed that further opposition to the new Constitution was futile, and leading spokesmen of the Indian Liberal Federation openly urged the Nationalists on their left to accept and work the Constitution so as to get what was possible out of it. Looking back over the Indian scene of the past few years, it seems that this centre point of view has gained

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steadily increasing support, and many of what the Marxists would call the "bourgeois" element in the Indian National Congress are now ranged with this centre body. Once more, from 1934 onwards, Congress began to break up into rival groups as the possibilities of the new Constitution showed themselves, and the natural instinct to accept and use power which was offered to them worked on the minds of the political leaders of the different sections of opinion in the country. Moreover, there was something impressive in the extensive preparations which went on for the forthcoming extensive constitutional changes. The delimitation of constituencies proceeded actively in 1935, and Sir Otto Niemeyer, the financial expert of world-wide repute, was invited to examine the budgetary position of the Central and Provincial Governments, and the principles of assignment of financial resources between them. The Government departments were working at full pressure on all sorts of detailed arrangements for putting the new Government of India Act into operation, and altogether by 1935 the observer at a distance might have been pardoned for assuming that the achievement of the much desired All-India Federation was only a matter of time, and a short time at that.

But unfortunately, a closer study of the situation led to doubts concerning this optimistic view. Inter-communal antagonism took on a wider and deeper aspect, challenging the basic principles on which the Federation was to be based, and from the side of the Princes also there were signs that opposition to early entry into the Federation was growing. Already in 1935, at meetings of the Princes, demands were being made for satisfactory modifications and alterations in fundamental points.

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The prospects of Federation became more and more doubtful as time went on until by the outbreak of war in September 1939 it was already clear that a dangerous, if not a complete impasse, had been reached. There was no immediate prospect of a solution of the very difficult problems raised by the entry of the Princes into the Federation, whilst the demands of the Mohammedans had gone to the length of visualizing a Mohammedan India, separate from Hindu India. Moreover, partisan fervour was increasing rather than decreasing when the great catastrophe in Europe put the whole question of India's political future into a new perspective.

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WITHIN a few days of the outbreak of war this new perspective was given by a declaration of the All-India National Congress that it could give whole-hearted support to Great Britain in the war only after India had become a sovereign autonomous nation. It was quite clear that the great majority of the members of the All-India National Congress fully sympathized with Great Britain and the British Dominions and, so far from wishing to hinder them, were ready and even anxious to help them in their war effort. This was true of every other major section of opinion in India.

The Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, got into touch immediately with the leaders of all sections of organized political opinion in the country and had full and frank discussions with them. It was clear, however, from the reports of these meetings which came through to the public that the All-India National Congress, the Moham-medans and the Princes were not prepared to alter in any material points the position which they had already taken up. Accordingly, in a White Paper published at Delhi on October 18th, Lord Linlithgow stated that no major constitutional development could take place in India during the war. In taking this view he was supported by Lord Zetland, Secretary of State for India.

<sup>1</sup> The author gratefully acknowledges the permission given him to reproduce some passages in this chapter from an article contributed to *Foreign Affairs* in January, 1940.

The Viceroy did, however, promise that there would be full consultation with all sections of Indian opinion after the war, if this should be found necessary and desirable, and that in the meantime he was arranging for a consultative body representative of Indian opinion generally to be associated with him during the war.

This announcement did not satisfy Congress. Mr. Gandhi described it as profoundly disappointing, while Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru more forcibly described it as spurning the hand of friendship extended by Congress to the British Government. Mr. Gandhi said that the Viceroy's statement simply shows that the old policy of divide and rule is to continue. The Working Committee of Congress followed these words by demanding that the governments in those provinces where the Congress Party was in power should resign. Accordingly, the Ministries resigned in Madras, Bombay, Bihar, Orissa, Assam, the Central Provinces, the United Provinces, and the North-West Frontier Province. As circumstances made it impossible to form alternative governments, the administration was carried on by officials, as provided by the Government of India Act of 1935. However, anxious efforts to reach an agreement continued to be made on both sides; and there was no wish to exploit the situation by calling on Congress to practise Civil Disobedience.

In Great Britain, too, there was much support for the demand that the British Government's views on India's future should be clarified. In the House of Commons on October 26th, Mr. Wedgwood Benn, speaking for the Labour Party, asked for a clear answer to Mr. Gandhi's questions about British war aims and India's share in the freedom for which the British Empire was fighting. Sir Samuel Hoare, replying for the Government, stated unequivocally that full Dominion Status for India was



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the aim of British policy, and that the Viceroy desired to take Indian political leaders fully into his confidence.

Such was the course of the opening exchanges in the latest phase of the continuing problem of India's political future, and succeeding events to the Autumn of 1940 have not materially altered the fundamentals of the problem which faces the British Government and the Princes and peoples of India. We have seen that two main subsidiary problems were impeding the solution of the great political problem at the outbreak of war, namely, the position of the Indian Princes, and secondly, the divergent social, religious, and political interests of the Hindu and Moslem communities. We have seen also that just before the outbreak of war the Princes had declared in 1939 that the terms offered to induce them to enter into the Federation were "fundamentally unsound," whilst the Mohammedans were in something approximating to open revolt against the scheme. It is well, therefore, that we should understand the reasons which led these two great parties to the proposed Federation to take up their intransigent position.

The great Indian Princes at present enjoy full domestic sovereignty, and they naturally hesitate to surrender any material part of this. For example, they do not want their states overrun by Federal agents, their law courts subordinated to British Indian courts, or their resources put at the disposal of any external authority. Above all, they do not want to have the control over constitutional reforms in their states taken from their hands or their relations with their own people influenced from outside. If they could be certain that their present privileges would always be guaranteed by the British Crown, many of their fears would vanish. But suppose the British Crown was replaced at some future date by an autonomous Indian Government.

Could they then be as certain of the sanctity of their rights?

Again, as they looked at British India, the Princes saw the overwhelming political supremacy of the Congress Party. Of the eleven British provinces, eight had Congress governments at the outbreak of war. Now the antagonism between the Congress Party and the Indian Princes is bitter and of long standing. As long ago as 1922, Lord Reading had to use the extraordinary powers vested in him as Viceroy to protect the Princes from the flood of vilification constantly directed against them, both as an order and as individuals, from left-wing quarters in British India. Since the inauguration of the 1935 Act, the Congress Party had carried on a ceaseless campaign against the Princes and had intervened directly in State politics by demanding that the Princes undertook political reforms aimed at giving public opinion in their states a decisive voice in government. Congress, of course, wanted these reforms carried out under its supervision. Mr. Gandhi's personal intervention in the affairs of Rajkot state in March 1939, his threat to fast to death, and the subsequent intervention of the Viceroy, were the most dramatic and publicized events in this campaign. But in many other states the intervention of Congress agents had resulted in various forms of disorder.

The population of the Indian states constitute only about one fifth of the population of India. Thus, even though their representation in the Federal Legislature and Government was to be weighted in their favour, they would always be in a definite minority. In the upper house of the Federal Legislature they would have 40 per cent of the seats; but in the lower house, which would inevitably be the more important, they would have only 33 per cent. If, therefore, the Princes believed that the

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Congress Party was destined to retain its predominant position in British India and to maintain its antagonistic attitude towards the princely order, they would most likely continue to look askance at Federation.

The opposition of the Mohammedans to Federation was no less formidable than that of the Princes. The Mohammedans are, of course, in a minority, but as there are nearly 90 millions of them, their position is very different from that of an ordinary minority. Since the inauguration of provincial autonomy, Mohammedan opposition to Federation has grown steadily stronger. Put quite simply, the Muslims' position is that Federation would place them in a status of hopeless inferiority in the Federal Government, *vis-à-vis* the Hindus, since the great majority of the Indian states are Hindu. Mohammedan spokesmen say that wherever there was a Congress government, Mohammedans were oppressed because the personnel of the Congress Party was almost exclusively Hindu. Their opposition to the present proposals for Federation has not stopped at words, for there had been outbreaks of rioting during the few months before the war.

In weighing the prospects for Federation the actual working of provincial autonomy has to be examined—that part of the 1935 Act which was brought into force in 1937. Under this Act the electoral basis of the Provincial Legislatures was immensely widened as compared with the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919, which the present Constitution superseded—the electorate was multiplied about fivefold, so that there were between 35 and 40 million voters in British India. The ministries in the provinces, which were chosen on the usual parliamentary principle, now had complete control over all subjects of provincial administration, subject only to

certain special powers vested in the provincial Governor, which until the crisis of 1939 were practically unused. There was, in fact, a rather striking analogy between the position of a provincial ministry in India and in Canada. On the other hand, the Indian provincial ministry was more independent of its Central Government than was its counterpart in South Africa. In a word, parliaments and responsible governments were set up in the eleven provinces of British India.

After the general elections in 1937, at which the Congress Party was returned to power in eight provinces, there was at first some doubt as to whether they would accept the responsibility conferred upon them by the electorate, and a dangerous deadlock threatened for some time. However, these doubts were eventually dispelled and "provincial autonomy" started on its career towards the end of that year. Even so, there were still some extreme elements in the Party which announced that, although they were prepared to sit in the Provincial Legislature and even join provincial Cabinets, they did so only in pursuance of the old Congress ideal of wrecking the reforms from within. It need hardly be said that a provincial Cabinet containing a sprinkling of avowed wreckers would not constitute a particularly good administration, unless the Prime Minister happened to be a man of extraordinary force and skill.

There were other possible sources of trouble. Practically all the Congress election manifestos had contained sweeping promises of social and economic amelioration, and the Congress voters, having put their men in power, naturally looked to them for an early fulfilment of these pledges. Further, the Congress Party had long engaged in active, often violent, agitation against the constituted government. It was hard for the rank and file to realize

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that they themselves had created the new provincial governments, and they continued to organize anti-government activities in various provinces. In some provinces the Congress governments thus had to face riots, strikes, and various other outbreaks. Also, many of the Congress Ministers took office suspicious of their Governors, and of the great imperial services, particularly the Indian Civil Service and the Indian Police, whom, hitherto, they had regarded as their natural enemies. Though these doubts did not entirely die away, the loyal acceptance of the new conditions by the services reduced the Ministers' suspicions to a point where they no longer formed a serious feature in the political situation.

Side by side with these potential causes of danger were other factors which encouraged a more optimistic view of the future of the new Constitution. From the moment the Congress leaders began to talk about refusing to take up the power which they had won at the elections, a marked and serious cleavage of opinion arose in their ranks. Some leaders were determined, if necessary, to accept office even in defiance of the orders of Mr. Gandhi and of the Party executive. Similar cleavages took place, one in 1926 when an influential section of the Party declared openly that it would no longer participate in the policy of wrecking the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms from within, and in 1924, when the late Mr. C. R. Das defeated Mr. Gandhi on the question of entry into Montagu-Chelmsford Legislatures. In short, whenever the Congress Party has been given an opportunity for constructive work and for the exercise of effective political power, there has always been an influential section ready to undertake the work and to use the power. In provinces like Madras and Bombay these sections were particularly strong, and in certain other provinces they were strong

enough to maintain ministries in opposition to the governing caucus of the Congress Party.

The outstanding fact about the working of the 1935 Act in the provinces was, then, that it had worked. It had been widely feared that in the all-important field of law and order the new ministries would come to grief. Some justification for this foreboding was found in February 1938—almost before the new governments had got into their stride—when the Congress ministries in Bihar and the United Provinces arranged for the release of prisoners who had been convicted of “political” offences during the previous regime. This was certainly the sort of contingency envisaged when the provincial Governors were given their special powers. Yet it could easily be seen how dangerous would have been a simple uncompromising refusal by the Governors to allow their Prime Ministers to have their way. The Working Committee of Congress would have exploited the situation to the full, and in the passions which would have been aroused the nascent Constitution might quite conceivably have perished.

Happily, the crisis was handled with considerable skill by the Viceroy. His efforts, it must be acknowledged, were supported by the moderation and sense of realities displayed by the Prime Ministers in the two provinces and by many of their colleagues. The two Governors were directed by the Viceroy to refuse to agree to a general and indiscriminate release of all political prisoners. Naturally this led their Prime Ministers to tender their resignations. But it was obvious that scope was still left for negotiations. After a short period of anxious consultations it was agreed that the Governors would follow their Prime Ministers’ advice in regard to a number of cases which had already been under examination, and that the cases of all other political prisoners should be examined

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individually on their merits. In Bengal, too, the ancient problem of political *detenus*, which had already caused as much trouble as any other single question in post-war Indian politics, was brought to an end during 1938 by the release of the men detained. A less severe crisis arose in May 1938 in Orissa, where the Congress Party successfully opposed the appointment of a senior civil servant to act as Governor while the regular Governor was on leave. Here, again, an unpleasant situation threatened for a time, but the worst was avoided by the obvious desire of all concerned to prevent a breakdown.

In the general field of maintenance of law and order, the Congress governments of Bombay and the United Provinces settled strikes at important industrial centres by direct intervention, while the governments of other provinces had not hesitated to crush violent outbreaks of lawlessness by force. Also, during the two years following the inauguration of the Act every provincial ministry was able to enact a good deal of valuable social and economic legislation. All of which was a message of good promise for the future even though it did not justify too easy an optimism.

Since the end of 1939 the Congress demand has been before the Viceroy of India and the British Government, and as the months have passed the sympathy of the great mass of the Indian peoples with their fellow citizens of Great Britain and the British Dominions has, if anything, grown stronger. Schemes for greatly expanding the Indian Army and Air Force have met with ready response, and the Working Committee of the All-India National Congress has even gone to the length of opposing Mr. Gandhi openly, and abrogating its basic policy of non-violence so far as resistance to aggressors is concerned. Throughout these months there was no danger of civil

disturbance or any other sort of direct action from the side of the All-India National Congress, but whilst the Congress demand was unsatisfied its leaders found themselves unable to throw themselves whole-heartedly into the struggle on the side of the Government, and this in turn has led to a breach in the unity of the country. In an effort to close this breach and unite all India in a national effort against the aggressor states—an effort which, as we have seen, the country was ready to undertake—the British Government made a further declaration through the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, on August 8, 1940. In this declaration His Majesty's Government stated that whilst they cannot leave their present responsibilities for the peace and welfare of India to any system of government whose authority is denied by large and powerful elements in India's national life, they have decided to do what they can to create the conditions for a united national effort in the war. Therefore, they authorize the Viceroy to invite a number of representative Indians to join his Executive Council. Further, he is authorized to establish a War Advisory Council to meet at regular intervals and to have representatives in it of the Indian states and of other interests in the national life of India as a whole. The statement also looks to the future and deals with the All-India Congress demand that the framing of the system of India's future government should be first and foremost the responsibility of Indians themselves. The British Government proclaim their sympathy with this demand and say that they wish to see it given the fullest practical expression, subject to the due fulfilment of the obligations which Great Britain's long connection with India has imposed on her. In order to give practical effect to this sympathy the British Government agree to setting up after the end of the war, with



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the least possible delay, a fully representative Indian body to work out the framework of the new Constitution. They will do all they can to speed up decisions made by this body, and, in the meantime, they will not only welcome, but they will help on in every possible way, every sincere and practical step that representative Indians themselves may take to come to a free agreement upon the form of this post-war representative body, and the lines on which it should work, and also upon the principles and outlines of the Constitution itself.

This declaration is in line with all British Imperial history. The political Constitutions of the great Dominions have, in every case, been the result of settlement by agreement between the different races, communities, and interests involved. In no case has there been coercion from outside or settlement by a mere majority vote inside. Indian conditions make this procedure more desirable than ever in her case. The traditional, ideological, and, in some respects, even material interests of the different races and communities, foredoom to failure any enforced agreement between them, or one based on the purely mechanical principle of majority vote.

Again, the whole historic background, as well as the personal and political interests, of the Indian Princes make any agreement—other than a fully voluntary one—between them and the other parties to an Indian Federation and Federal Government not only an unreal and transient thing, but something fraught with actual danger for the future.

The reception of the offer of August 8th by the various interests in British India illustrates these considerations clearly. Congress rejected the offer without consideration, the President of Congress declining to discuss it with the Viceroy. The reason for this peremptory rejection was

that Congress stands firm on its demand for an unqualified acceptance by the British Government of Indian independence, with its corollary of a government of India conceived and controlled by Congress. As we have seen, this attitude maintains in all their old strength, and in their most formidable and uncompromising shape, those fundamental obstacles to Indian national unity which we have already considered. The other interests involved, namely, the Muslim League and the Indian Mahasbha, whilst accepting in principle the proposals contained in the offer, were unable to accept them in detail. The Muslim League wanted more places on the Viceroy's Executive Council than he was prepared to concede, and, further, its leaders demanded certain important guarantees for the future, in case the Congress leaders changed their mind and decided to join the Executive Council later. These guarantees the Viceroy felt himself unable to give. The Mahasbha, on the other hand, put their claims high in order to counter the Mahommedans, with the result that it was impossible to put the proposals into effect. It would, of course, have been possible for Lord Linlithgow to expand his Council by the addition to its numbers of some Indians of standing and experience, but this would not have met the needs and desires of either the British and Indian Governments or the political interests in India, and the very fruitful potentialities of the statement of August 8th are, therefore, in abeyance for the present.

Meanwhile, Mr. Gandhi went beyond the exercise of the right to express his conscientious objection to war by allowing Congress to oppose actively the recruitment of Indians in the armed forces, work in munitions factories, and other vital activities of the national war effort. Some of the most prominent Congress men, including Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, were arrested for their activities

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in opposition to the national effort, and, as far as Congress is concerned, the situation tends to deteriorate. Nevertheless, important individuals and elements in the pre-war Congress movement refuse to take any part in these later developments, and it seems clear that the movement is in process of one of those periods of disintegration which, as we have seen, are the inevitable outcome of its leaders' refusal to seize and exercise political power when it is offered to them.

The interval between August 1940 and the summer of 1941 has been by no means void of political importance and development. Unhappily, some of these developments, and primarily the renewal of Hindu-Muslim rioting in Bombay and elsewhere, have been such as to make more difficult than ever the achievement of a genuine agreement between the rival interests. The Indian Liberals or Moderates, whose chief spokesman now is Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, made a constructive effort to end the existing deadlock by proposals which had as their main features the suggestion that a definite time-limit should be fixed for the attainment of Dominion Status by India and that in the reconstitution of the Governor-General's Executive Council on a more popular basis Defence and Finance should be placed under the control of experienced Indian members. Facilities were also demanded for the industrialization and militarization of the country. These proposals, however, do not seem to have raised any great enthusiasm either in India or in Great Britain, and very little has been heard since their promulgation.

The fundamental truth of the Indian problem is that India is in the position in which the old American Colonies of Great Britain found themselves after 1783, in which the Dominion of Canada was in the nineteenth century, and Australia at the beginning of the twentieth century.

*1937-1940*

That is to say, her various peoples and interests are faced with the problem of finding a basis of agreement for the creation of a national government and a national life. It is nothing less than that. There is no question of the majority of the nation being held to ransom by the intransigence of any minority groups, for the Indian nation and the Indian national government are not yet in existence. The same sort of act of creative statesmanship is necessary to turn the Indian provinces and states into a federally united nation as was necessary in each of the cases of the three great federations mentioned above. But such acts of statesmanship are only possible where the peoples and interests concerned have reached the point at which they can sink their separate and rival claims in the interests of the nation as a whole, and agree on all the basic conditions on which a national constitution can be built and function. The British Government is one of the interests concerned in this process—a great and powerful interest, nevertheless only one of the interests—and its part is clearly a limited one.

## THE CRIPPS MISSION .

A COMMENTARY on the judgments which form the last paragraph of the previous chapter has been provided by happenings in India since the summer of 1941, and, in particular, by the mission of Sir Stafford Cripps which revealed in striking fashion the fundamental conditions of Indian politics.

Throughout the second half of 1941, recognition of the strain and urgency of the war undoubtedly grew in India, but only slowly. Until the entry of Japan into the war India was still far removed from the fighting front, and the German attack on Russia made no direct and immediate threat to India. Nevertheless, the expansion of the Indian Army, the steady growth of Indian war industries, and the feats of arms of Indian soldiers on the battlefields of Africa, brought home to the people of India with ever greater insistence, the fact that their stake in the war was not less than that of any other of the combatants. Political discussion tended to become academic, although there was always a rumble from the Moslems among whom the Pakistan policy grew in favour, from the Hindu Mahasabha in opposition to the All-India Moslem League, and from one wing at least of the Congress Party. But the broad picture, until December 7, 1941, was of a country going further and further into the war, by slow and easy steps, conscious of grave internal divisions, but resigned to their existence and apparently disposed to leave them alone until after the war.

Yet, during these months, attempts to find a way out of the political impasse were not wanting. Although the

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breakdown of the negotiations attending the offer of August 1940 prevented the chief leaders of the various national interests and parties from joining the Viceroy's Council, Lord Linlithgow in July 1941 enlarged the latter to a membership of eight Indians (seven of them non-officials) and five Europeans. Some of the new Indian members were men of wide and real political influence even if they did not represent specific Congress or Muslim League points of view, and their presence in the Council gave it a far more representative character than it had before they joined. Also, a National Defence Council was formed to advise the Government on the defence of India, its members being persons prominent in the political life of the British Provinces and the Indian States. And, lastly, it was decided to exchange Ministers between Delhi and Washington and Delhi and Chungking.

The entry of Japan into full hostilities, and particularly the series of rapid and striking victories which brought her forces to the very gates of India, altered the situation radically. Within a few weeks the people of India found themselves right in the front line of the war, exposed to invasion and mortal danger. The reaction throughout the country was, broadly speaking, salutary. Leaders of the different interests and political parties saw and, what is more, acknowledged the need for national unity. From all quarters of responsible Indian politics came the resolve to resist Japanese aggression to the death. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru himself, released from gaol in December 1941, was as insistent as anybody that the Japanese attack on India must be resisted to the death. This healthy and patriotic reaction encouraged the British Government to make the most far-reaching offer ever made to India, and on March 11, 1942, Mr. Churchill

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announced that the War Cabinet had agreed upon a plan for India and that Sir Stafford Cripps would be going to India to lay it before the Indian Government and Indian political parties. (The choice of Sir Stafford Cripps as envoy was a wise one, for he had always been associated with progressive views on India and it could be safely assumed that all sections of opinion would have confidence in him.) He arrived in Delhi on March 23rd, and after a week's consultation with leaders of political opinion he published the War Cabinet's proposals. Briefly, these were for the creation of an Indian Union with full Dominion status. Immediately hostilities ceased, and before the signing of a peace treaty should bring the war technically to an end, general elections should be held in all the provinces of British India, and, out of the lower houses of the provincial legislatures thus elected, a single electoral college should be formed. This college would then proceed by proportional representation to elect a constitution-making body, equal in numbers to about one-tenth of the numbers of the electoral college. But if the leaders of the various political parties in India wished to choose the constitution-making body by some other means, they were at liberty to do so. Indian States would be invited to send representatives to the constitution-making body in proportion to their population. Any constitution agreed to by the constituent body would be accepted by the British Government, but any province of British India not willing to enter into the proposed Indian Union could remain outside it. If such a province, by agreement, decided upon a new constitution for itself, then the British Government would agree to the constitution and give the non-acceding province similar status to that enjoyed by the Indian Union. But before responsibility was handed over from British to Indian

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hands, the British Government would enter into a treaty with the Indian Union regarding the protection of minorities in India, so as to honour pledges given in the past by the British to these minorities. The Indian Union would be able to state its own terms of association with the other British Dominions, and would not be bound in any way in this respect by the British Government.

Sir Stafford Cripps spent some days in strenuous consultation with the chief leaders of Indian parties and political opinion, the discussion with the Congress Party leaders dealing mainly with the control of the Ministry of Defence. Sir Stafford made it clear that no fundamental change could be made in the War Cabinet's proposals, which laid it down clearly that the responsibility for India's defence during the war must remain with the British Government. Nevertheless, it looked for a time as though the proposals, far-reaching and thoroughgoing as they were, would receive general support, even from the Congress Party. But these hopes were doomed to be dashed. In the end, the All-India Moslem League, Congress Party, the Sikhs, and the Hindu Mahasabha all rejected the proposals, but for different reasons. Broadly speaking, the Congress Party leaders, namely Mr. Gandhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Abdul Kalam Azad, President of the All-India National Congress, were more concerned with the immediate setting up of a fully responsible national government than with anything else, whilst the Moslems, Sikhs and Hindu Mahasabha were thinking primarily of the long-term political organization of India, and the enduring balance of political power therein. Thus, all these great interests opposed the proposal that any province of British India should have the right to stay out of the Indian Union, but all for different reasons. The Mohammedans thought that the



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proposal was not sufficiently thoroughgoing and that the Pakistan plan, that is the secession of certain predominantly Moslem parts of the country from India, should have found a place in the scheme. The Hindu Mahasabha objected precisely because they were afraid that it might lead ultimately to the Pakistan solution, or something like it, whilst the Sikhs objected to being regarded as merely one element in the Punjab, whereas they were in reality a distinct racial, social and religious entity. In short, the basic reaction was much the same as to the earlier proposals of August 1940, and within a day or two of the publication of the proposals it became obvious that they were going to share the same fate as the earlier proposals of 1940.

A violent controversy broke out in India with the publication of the proposals, and Congress leaders were quick to say that they had been misled and that right up to the day of publication they had expected the proposals to contain a plan for a fully responsible national government for India. Sir Stafford Cripps, however, was able to refute this charge with ease. In the first place, it was obvious from the very text of the document which he took out to India, with its insistence on the reservation of the responsibility for the defence of India by the British Government, that nothing like a fully responsible national government for India was contemplated during the war. Then, in a broadcast on April 11th, he showed that the setting up of such a government immediately, as demanded by the Congress Party leaders, would completely contradict all British pledges to the minorities. "Realize what this means," he said. "Government for an indefinite period by a set of persons nominated by Indian parties responsible to no legislature or electorate, incapable of being changed, and the majority of whom

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would be in a position to dominate large minorities." In a word, precisely what all the great minorities in India, including Moslems and Sikhs, were determined to fight against.

Admittedly the situation left by the failure of the Cripps Mission is unsatisfactory, but, at any rate, the mission did accomplish the valuable result of showing the people of India and their leaders the extent and character of the obstacles to national unity, and it fixed the attention of the whole outside world, to an extraordinary extent, on the same thing. It is true to say that the realities of the Indian situation have never been so widely understood and the value of this understanding, both in India and outside, is that it must inevitably lead to a determined effort to find a solution for the problems whose character is now so well known. Inside India, the first political effect was that which we have seen has always happened when the opportunity for a forward constitutional move has been put before Indian leaders. The Congress Party was split. Mr. Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru went back to the old ideal of passive resistance and non-co-operation, whilst a strong and influential section, led by Mr. Rajagopalachariar, believed that the time had come to consult with the Moslem League for the purpose of coming to an agreement which would make a national government possible. He is President of the Madras Legislative Congress Party, and on April 24, 1942, he persuaded his Party to pass a resolution to this effect. On May 2nd, however, at a meeting of the Congress Party, Mr. Rajagopalachariar's motion for recognition of the Moslem League's demands for separation was brought forward and was lost by 120 votes to 15.

But it looks as though India will refuse to be diverted from her main purpose of helping to smash the threat to

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her life from the aggressive powers, and will not allow herself to be plunged into political strife in this hour of destiny. Her people and their leaders have undoubtedly taken to heart much of the lesson taught by the Cripps Mission and in this fact is hope for the future.

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